The Moon's Birthday

Dorothy Rowe

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THE MOON'S BIRTHDAY

And Other Stories of Chinese Children

BY

DOROTHY ROWE

Author of "The Rabbit Lantern," etc.

J R79m

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

K'O SHUANG-SHOU and MA TZU-YU

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TO BENJAMIN

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THE MOON'S BIRTHDAY

THE MOON'S BIRTHDAY

WOULD you ever think the moon could be as excited as a little boy or girl over her birthday night? The moon must be very old, older than any Mother or Father or Grandma. She must have had dozens and dozens of birthday parties. Yet the moon *was* excited because her face got very round and shiny, and she looked out over the world in a very special way on this birthday night when all the Chinese boys and girls were waiting for her party.

Once long ago the children of China, thinking about a birthday party for the moon, wondered what they could bring her for a birthday present. "The moon is full of light," they said. "She loves brightness more than the dark. She is never dark at all except when the dragon gets angry and swallows her and people say, 'O, that

is an eclipse!' and are sorry for the moon. But even then she comes back into the light again as soon as ever she can, and most of the time she is trying to grow bigger and more full of light. We know," the Chinese children said, "that the moon looks saddest those nights when her brightness is growing smaller and smaller, and so perhaps the birthday present the moon would love best would be beautiful lanterns. We will have lanterns of every color and wonderful shapes," the children said, and clapped their hands.

The Lantern Maker smiled when the children told him of their plan. He smiled and then he said, "Of course, the moon would be happy with such beautiful presents, and of course I shall make the lanterns for you, Little Ones."

The first party for the moon was not as big or as wonderful as other parties that came afterwards when the Lantern Maker had learned how to make nicer lanterns, and when there were more children to carry the beautiful presents to the party for the moon.

The gayest party of all was the one for which the Lantern Maker made a little paper man called Small Flour Face because there was a white patch on his nose like a daub of flour. He

was a very good lantern. His coat was green and his paper trousers were pink and frilly. He had paper feet that moved in a lifelike way, and when you did not look too closely you'd never know his body was made of bamboo and his face of mud. The body of Small Flour Face was round and hollow and inside it was the place for the bright red candle that some little boy or girl would light when the time came to take him to the Moon's party. Lantern Maker fastened a stick to the head of Small Flour Face, put a candle in him and hung him up in the shop to wait until some one bought him for a present to the moon.

Small Flour Face was hung beside two other paper lantern men and they had really much uglier clothes than his. At first he was proud of his good clothes and looked out over the shop in a haughty manner.

"Hello, there, how are you?" he called to a paper Frog Lantern, all green and warty, whose huge eyes bulged out as if in surprise at the beautiful clothes of Small Flour Face.

"I am quite leapy, thank you," the Green Frog said. "I am being very careful of my shiny green skin and standing still so the candle

in me won't tip over and break. Pretty soon some one will come into the shop and buy me and I shall go on a long journey."

"Yes, I know," Small Flour Face said. "I hope I shall be bought very soon, too, and taken out into the great world where the streets are all yellow and misty and there is much sky just as blue as that little bit that peeps in the window over there."

The Green Frog sighed, and then a Snowy Swan with frilled white paper feathers sighed, too, and said, "Do you think it will ever be time for the party? I want to see the sky. Some one told me once that there is a faraway land where the windows are glass so people can look through and see much sky. But of course paper windows like the ones in our shop are very nice to keep out the cold, and sometimes, when a bit of a hole is torn, we can look through and see the sky just as Small Flour Face can up there where he hangs. And I want to see water, too. Do you know what water is? Something that is thick and thin all at once and very shining and sometimes blue. Did you know I am supposed to be put right down on water so my little green

wooden legs sit in the water? I will be rather nice looking when I have my candle lit."

"You'll not be so ugly, certainly," said a giant pink paper lotus flower, whose curly pink leaves rounded up from a green paper stem, almost hiding the place in her heart where the candle could be put. "You are not so ugly," she said, "but don't you really know that any boy or girl would think I was a more beautiful present for the moon than any other lantern?"

Small Flour Face tilted his head rather proudly and the Green Frog's eyes were black and bulgy with disgust, and the frilly feathers of Snowy Swan rustled loudly. But before they could answer there was a shrill little call from one of the boys who pasted paper lanterns for Lantern Maker. "Seller of Lanterns, Seller of Lanterns," he called. "A buyer of lanterns comes. He is just entering the shop."

The Lantern Maker put down a little paper boat he was making, wiped his pasty fingers on his blue trousers and went to meet the tall, kind man who had come to buy a Birthday of the Moon lantern for his little son.

"This green frog is very good," Lantern Maker said, as he followed the tall, kind man about the shop.

"Um," said the man, "and it sells for how many pennies?"

"Twenty pennies, and that is very cheap for such a well-made green paper frog."

All the lanterns were still as still. They hung quietly all about the room and from the ceiling. The little ducks and green frogs sat on the floor and waited, and even the big paper fish, whose red paper fins were fastened on with wire and supposed to wiggle all the time, was still. For each little paper lantern hoped in his paper lantern heart that the tall, kind man would choose him.

"How many pennies to buy this man lantern with the floury face?" they heard him ask.

And Small Flour Face held his breath for joy. Surely any one could see how his trousers were most beautiful and how intelligently his head was shaped! Why, who would want a plain green frog when . . .

"That paper man is forty pennies," Lantern Maker said.

"Forty pennies! Huh, that is truly expensive. Why, I should never pay that much."

"Well, perhaps I could sell him a little cheaper to you since you are such a good buyer of paper lanterns. How much will you pay?" Lantern Maker asked.

"Twenty-five pennies is the most I would give for that paper lantern man."

"Twenty-five pennies! Why, he cost more than that to make! Look at his fine head and his good, green coat. Isn't he worth at least thirty-five pennies?"

"I will not buy him," the tall, kind man said. "Too expensive. I shall take the Green Frog."

And when Small Flour Face heard this his head dropped lower and lower on his bamboo neck and he was very sad, for he had been made almost a week and no one wanted him. There had been many, many Snowy Swans and White Ducks and Green Frogs sold, and dozens of pink-paper lotus flowers had been lovingly carried out into the sunshine by happy little children who were excited about the Moon's birthday party, but always the cheaper lantern men had been

taken and no one seemed to have as many coppers as were needed to buy Small Flour Face.

The night before the birthday party came. The green frog had been taken away by a little girl who talked loudly to Lantern Maker and said, "I shall take this frog lantern to the Palace of the Northern Sea. I shall go with my father and he will help me to light the candle that goes inside the frog to make him shine."

"Quite right, quite right, little mistress," Lantern Maker answered, as he put the stick that was tied to Green Frog in her fat, brown hand. "And you will ride out on a boat into the lake that the stars sprinkle with gold. You will go slowly out among the lotus leaves and the other tiny boats, and put this beautiful frog lantern down on the quiet water."

"Oh, yes, Lantern Man," the happy little girl said, "oh, yes, and I shall ride about in the little boat afterward and see the moon. I think the moon will like so many shining lanterns on the star-pricked lake, and especially because they will all be birthday presents from us."

Small Flour Face stayed on his hook and shook his floury face and sighed. The Snowy Swan was taken, too, that afternoon, and, as she looked back rather haughtily at the poor lantern man, he heard the little boy who had bought her, say, "My big brother has brought me two round, shiny-green lotus leaves that are bent upward like cups. They have long stems and I can hold them by those stems. My big brother says when night comes he will fasten tall, red candles in the cup which the leaves make, and I can have two birthday presents for the moon. But I wanted a white bird to put between the leafy lanterns when I give them to the moon, so I came to buy this Snowy Swan from you."

Small Flour Face stayed on his hook and hung his floury face and sighed. Dusk came in at the paper windows and ran on gray feet into the far corners of the little shop. The small boys, who helped Lantern Maker, put on their blue coats and went home. Lantern Maker looked about the shop and was very glad so many lanterns had been bought. He planned to keep the others until the next moon birthday party and, because he was tired,

he thought to himself that perhaps no one else would come tonight. "It is late," he thought. "Here by the door I can see the moon coming up over the black roofs to her party."

Small Flour Face sighed so loudly then that Lantern Maker heard him. He turned and said, "So, you whom I made so carefully are unsold. Hum, I wonder why? Perhaps it is the price. People do make such a fuss about prices. You are a seemly lantern, quite worth forty pennies, but perhaps—well—look here, small Floury One, I see you are sad at not going to the party. Now, if any one still comes into the shop tonight, I shall let you go for thirty pennies."

The little lantern man lifted his white face and looked at the Maker of Lanterns. He almost smiled with joy and he was so pretty when he started to thank the kind Lantern Maker that, just that very minute when a little boy dashed into the shop, he was by far the best-looking lantern in all the room.

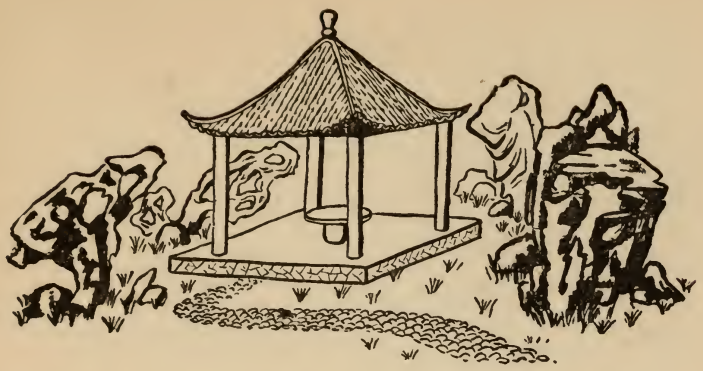
"I want that one, Mother," the little boy said, and he pointed right at Small Flour Face. The poor little lantern was so excited he fairly danced on his hook. He waited for

Lantern Maker to say, "That costs but thirty pennies." Then he heard the little boy say, "That is cheap, Mother. I want it." And the Mother said, "All right, Son." So Lantern Maker smiled knowingly as he gave Small Flour Face to the little boy.

"Be careful of him and carry him safely to the birthday party," he said. So the little boy took Small Flour Face away, out into the moon-bright streets, past crowds of happy children who had their birthday-party lanterns lit and were marching along the streets, past many houses until at last they came to the Palace of the Northern Sea, to that place where Small Flour Face had most wanted to go.

The party was all ready for the moon. Hundreds of children and grown-up people crowded into the boats that went out on the shining water. Hundreds of beautiful paper lanterns were lit and put gently down to glow on the bright lake, and at last Small Flour Face saw his candle lit and felt the little boy place him near Snowy Swan and Green Frog on the star-sprinkled water. It was the happiest moment of all his life. He

forgot all the sadness of the dark shop and lifted his face to the moon, to the round, gold, birthday moon that shone and smiled back at him, and was very glad.



THE WARTY FROG LANTERN

Warty Frog, all green and leapy, turned on his stick as he hung in the little girl's hand and said in his best lantern manner, "Oh, good-by, you lanterns in the dim shop. Good-by! I have been bought, as you see, by this little girl, Mai Jen. She takes me home now to keep until the night of the party for the moon."

Mai Jen didn't hear Warty Frog speak, but she saw his bulgy eyes and his happy face and she said to Father as they walked out of the Lantern Man's shop, "Thank you, Father, for buying me this green frog. I like him so much, and my heart is all jumpy when

I think how pretty he will be with a lighted candle in the hole in his back."

Father smiled at his little girl, and perhaps he remembered when he was a little boy and bought lanterns, too. So he put his hand on Mai Jen's very black hair and smoothed her black braids with his long fingers.

"Be happy, little daughter. Life is a game, and it is easiest to play if the heart is glad."

Mai Jen held Warty Frog carefully as she stepped into the ricksha and stood with her back up against Father's knees while they rode home. Warty Frog had a gay heart, too, for he knew that after another night and another day he would really go to the great Northern Sea and see the party for the moon. He did not worry about the night and the day still to come, for he knew that it makes time longer and longer if one thinks of it too much. So as he rode along in the ricksha, wobbling about at the end of his stick and sure that Mai Jen held the other end tightly, he watched the world.

Warty Frog had lived all his life in the Lantern Man's shop and knew very little of the world outside. He saw many little chil-

dren playing in the streets now, and he was not sure if they were real children or big paper lanterns in little red aprons and little blue trousers. He almost fell off his stick in surprise when he rode by the moat around the palace wall and saw it full of lotus flowers all pink and white. "Oh, is that another lantern shop?" he asked. "I suppose it is, and I notice that all the frog lanterns are already sold. It is easy to see that we warty frogs are very, very popular." And with this thought he seemed to puff up with pride and grow greener and wartier as his black eyes bulged.

The ricksha stopped suddenly before a big, red door, and the man who pulled put down his shafts and stepped aside to let Mai Jen and Father get out. "You have arrived," said the ricksha puller as he wiped his hot face on a blue towel. Mai Jen gave a little shout of joy and cried, "Oh, won't nurse be pleased to see my warty frog lantern!"

A tall gateman in a long, gray coat bowed to Mai Jen and said, "The little miss is returned," and to this friendly old man Mai Jen showed Warty Frog and was happy when

he said, "Good, good, you bought very rightly, I am sure."

The ricksha puller asked so loudly for more when Father put the ten copper pennies in his hand that Father said, "That is more than enough and is what you bargained to pull us for. Speak less, or I shall take some of the coppers away from you."

Mai Jen turned to look at them, and a soft little smile came into her face. She reached into the deep pocket of her pink coat and pulled out a round copper. "Here, ricksha puller," she said as she stepped over the high sill at the gate and into the street again, "here is another copper. I guess my Warty Frog Lantern must have been quite heavy. You only bargained for two passengers, and he was extra, wasn't he? There, that's all right. Come Father, he will not ask for more."

Mai Jen's nurse had heard the loud talking and she came to the gate and took the little girl's hand. "Never did I see such a fine lantern," nurse said. "Why, the Warty Frog seems almost to speak, doesn't he?"

Warty Frog rolled his black, bulgy eyes and

said to himself, "Fine, am I? Humph. I should think so, most certainly."

Mai Jen did not hear him, and went on telling nurse all about the Lantern shop and how much Warty Frog had cost as they walked through the second gate that was painted bright green, through the first court, and then through a little door all round like the moon, that led into the garden. Warty Frog was not noticed and no one spoke to him, so he twisted and turned on his stick and looked about him in the gay, flowery garden.

"Humph!" he said, "this is rather a good place, I'd say. I really quite like the cool shade of these great trees that drip pink fragrance from their branches. These are evidently real flowers, for lantern flowers don't smell except of paint and a strange, sour smell of paste."

Just then Mai Jen jerked her hand away from her nurse, took a little flying jump, and ran right up on a play bridge humped in the middle like a camel's back. "Goodness me!" gasped Warty Frog. "That was sudden. Fancy a bridge in the middle of a garden."

Mai Jen stopped as suddenly as she had

started. She twisted Warty Frog around on his stick and looked at him. One of her black braids swung out over her shoulder and jerked back and forth once or twice as she kept her head tilted and looked and looked at Warty Frog.

"Did you speak?" she asked in Quiet Language which only lanterns and little girls can understand.

"I did, thank you. I did," Warty Frog replied in a most warty voice. "I should like it, my dear, if you'd be a little more careful of me, and explain things as we go along."

Mai Jen laughed a gurgling joy-laugh and knew that she and Warty Frog, who had such easily hurt feelings, were going to have a lovely time playing together until supper. Perhaps nurse ought to be sent away, because sometimes nurses act so grown-up and foolish. So Mai Jen pretended to be very old herself and said, "Nurse, you may go now, and sit in the little Pavilion of Cool Peace there on the hill. I shall take a short walk about the garden, and your feet being so small, you can't go fast enough. If I need you I shall call and you will come at once."

Nurse was almost afraid of Mai Jen when she acted this way, so nurse bowed and said, "I will await your orders in the Pavilion on the hill. And do not forget that supper time is not far off."

Mai Jen and Warty Frog were alone. They went carefully down the other steep side of the bridge that went over the very small stream, and neither of them could decide which one should speak first. Mai Jen kept her eyes on the tiny path that was made of little smooth pebbles planted in the pattern of flowers and other designs. She followed the jiggling, turning path that seemed to run timidly in its wanderings around the edge of the stream and then up narrow steps and around gray rocks piled on top of each other into a make-believe mountain.

"Well," said Warty Frog, "quite a walk, quite a walk, but as yet you speak nothing except little shyness in your brown eyes. I should really appreciate some explanations, you know."

Mai Jen had to laugh then, and smiles chased the shyness from her eyes.

"Well," she answered, "I did send nurse

away. She is such a bother with her little feet. Did you know her feet are not supposed to be little, but she had them tied up when she was five years old and they never did grow any more?"

"Foolish, I'd say," Warty Frog answered in a good, friendly way.

"I am sorry about it, Warty Frog, because it does make nurse so poky, but it is lucky for me, my mother says, that it isn't stylish to have tiny feet now, so mine are 'big as wooden boats'."

"Oh," said Warty Frog, trying to be interested when really he was thinking how strange girl children were to imagine a fine frog lantern would care at all about the size of feet. Pooh, that was entirely the business of Lantern Makers and people makers and really a most dull and uninteresting subject. Mai Jen felt that she was not keeping Warty Frog amused. It worried her and she really could not think what to say, when suddenly she remembered that Warty Frog was a lantern meant to be put on the water. It would be very exciting to try him out in the Pond of the Golden Fish over by the hill. "Shall

I tell him?" she wondered to herself. He seemed quite uppish and might not care to be tried out in the water. If he acted cross and fidgety likely he would spoil all the fun by refusing to be put on the water. "I guess I will just be very polite to him and tell him all the explaining things he seems to want to know and then, when we come to the Pond, I'll surprise him," she said to herself.

Mai Jen walked around a sudden turn in the Pebbly Path and up tiny steps under an archway of rocks. "Warty Frog," she said, "don't you think this path is pretty? My grandfather ordered these stones from a far-away mountain where pebbles lie in great heaps, and he ordered this cunning walk to be made. These big gray stones are very wonderful, too, though I can't quite remember why. But lots of times my father's friends come to walk in the garden with him and I hear them say, 'Excellent rocks, fine samples of the Gargoyle stone, imported from the far south no doubt, no doubt. I think that means they are very special stones, don't you?"

"Ah, so they are, so they are, excellent rocks, fine samples of the—" began Warty

Frog making an imitating voice just like a grown-up friend of Father's might use. Mai Jen laughed with joy. "You are such fun, Warty," she said. And he answered, "Warty Frog is my name. Kindly use the whole title, my dear. It were best—" And he could not understand why Mai Jen only laughed and laughed some more.

The staring, bulgy eyes of Mr. Warty Frog were so black and displeased that Mai Jen gave a little end-of-a-laugh gulp and remembered her manners very nicely.

"Now we climb up the hill, and this is not a real hill but just a made hill. My grandfather wanted to have a pond in his garden, so when the workmen came and dug a deep hole they piled all the earth into the shape of a hill by the side of the garden wall. I suppose at first it looked all bare and empty, but now the rocks and the grass and the ivy and the little Pavilion make it very pretty, don't they? Shall we walk down the other side?" Mai Jen asked softly, while in her heart she was busy thinking about the Pond of the Golden Fish.

"Certainly, let us walk on. I find your remarks about the history of this excellent garden very educational. Might I ask what other things there are to see?"

"Goodness, how stuck-up he is acting," said Mai Jen to herself, and then answered politely and carefully in Quiet Language, "I should like you to see the Pond of the Golden Fish. It is shaped like a great peach and bordered with gray stones. The middle of it is full of water and real fishes swim there. They swim around and around and make their tails wave back and forth like big, red fans. There, look, there below us is the pond."

Warty Frog twisted his head to see, and for the first time looked at a pond and real water such as he was told was in the Northern Sea.

"So that is water, is it? Well, I really never imagined it would look so like the sky that I used to see from the lantern shop."

Mai Jen saw that he was interested. She must be careful that he was not afraid and she must not let him get tired. "Would you like to see it a little closer? The closer you get to the peach-shaped pond the more like

blue sky it looks, I've found. Let's sit down here on the very edge." So she sat down and spread out her pink coat about her. She stuck the stick, that was a handle for Warty Frog, into the soft earth beside her and let him sit down in the best lantern style with his feet hanging down. Warty Frog acted a little as if he were sitting in a rocking-chair, for he swung gently back and forth in the tiny wind that pushed him softly. Then the wind jumped onto the water of the pond and broke the sky pictures in it into little slivers.

Warty Frog seemed glad to rest after the long trip through the garden, so Mai Jen sat still and planned her trick. She planned that she would turn suddenly to Warty Frog, take him by the stick, and put him down in the water for just a minute to see how he would look. Of course he would be very angry, but she really thought she would rather enjoy seeing him be cross, for he did make the funniest faces and pretend to be so very grown-up and proper. She would not let him stay long, but just long enough to see what a fine show he would make the next night on

the Northern Sea, and then a minute more to see what cute mad faces he could make and how his eyes would bulge when he was exceedingly cross.

The wind kept rocking Warty Frog back and forth, and the cool, blue water gave little gasps as the wind ruffled it. Mai Jen sat quietly thinking and smiling to herself, and all about her the garden was very still as if it, too, were waiting for Mai Jen to play her trick.

So suddenly that even the little birds who were planning to find their beds in the big willow tree over the pond gave frightened cheeps and flew away, there came a tearing sound and then a splash and what do you think Mai Jen saw? Right beside her, where Warty Frog had been sitting swinging in the wind, there was nothing at all but the stick on which he had hung. When she gave a little cry and leaned over the high edge of the peach-shaped pond, she saw Warty Frog standing on his head in the water and moving his back end in a terribly frightening way behind him.

Mai Jen called out suddenly, "Oh, Warty, I am so sorry. Here, let me reach your foot." But though she lay down and reached just as far as she could she could not touch him at all. "Oh, poor Warty, I really don't think you are making much fuss about it. However shall I get you out? Nurse, nurse," she called. And after what seemed hours but was just a little minute, because the voice of Mai Jen had frightened her, nurse came running as fast as her little feet could go.

"Oh, nurse, please get Warty Frog out of the pond. He was sitting so nicely here beside me and I was being bad and not noticing him and thinking what fun it would be to put him in the water and surprise him, when the silly little wind blew him right off his stick into the water."

Nurse got down on her knees, and then lay down flat on the edge of the pond. Mai Jen kept telling her to hurry and then talking every minute. "Oh, it isn't fun at all. I thought I would love to see Warty Frog in the water, but I don't. I like him too much. Oh, reach away down and pull him out. There, you have him. Now, give my frog lantern to me."

"Yes, yes," said nurse. "He almost sank, I should say." And she puffed as she got up to her knees and on to her little feet again.

Mai Jen was too busy to hear her. She looked into the black, bulgy eyes of Warty Frog and saw that they were very sad. He was not cross at all or acting grown-up and displeased. He was only very cold and miserable and his feelings hurting him all the time. Mai Jen forgot all her plans to trick him, and forgot that he had ever seemed stuck-up to her. She knew he was the dearest frog lantern in all the world and she took her own red handkerchief to wipe his nose and ears. "Oh, please don't mind, Warty, for I am so sorry and I know you will soon dry off and be even more beautiful than before. I certainly like you more than I ever did and I think you are the nicest lantern in all the world. Won't you make your eyes shine again and bulge out and look proud and gay? Please, Warty?"

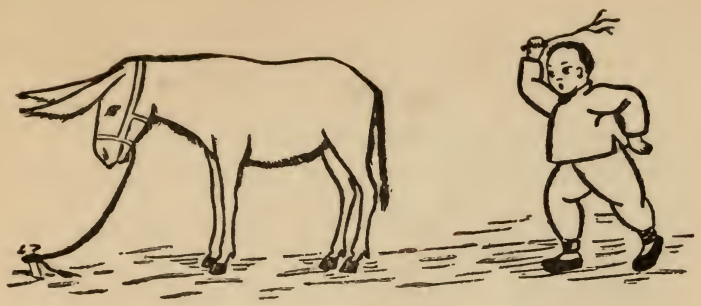
Poor Warty gave a little grunt as if he were coughing out the water in his throat. He moved his warty head a little to one side and then back again to look at Mai Jen.

"There, there, my dear, why so many pleases and such cry-baby talk? I assure you I am quite all right, quite all right indeed, and we will not speak any more about this unexpected happening. But I hope you will pardon my eyes looking a little strange. You see they are exceedingly wet and that is unusual, most unusual."

Nurse looked at his eyes and said to Mai Jen, "Oh, they will dry off soon, I am sure."

Warty Frog turned those poor, wet eyes on nurse and said, though that woman never heard him at all, "Madam, I will attend to my own eyes, thank you, and Mai Jen and I really do not care to have you about. We have further business of investigating the gardens."

Mai Jen had to laugh, partly because Warty Frog was so very funny, and partly because she was so happy to have him safe and well again and to know that he liked her best of all.



THE DONKEY BOY

The Grandfather of little Wang Pao, and the Father of little Wang Pao had always lived out in the hills far from the big city of Peking. They had lived for years and years in the same little house with brown mud walls and a roof of reeds, and they had always had two donkeys to help them earn money. One donkey always stayed at home to help plough the land or carry the fire grass from over the hills, but one donkey wore a saddle every day and was taken out to the big road and to the big temple of Wo Fo Ssu to see if some one did not want to hire him for a ride into the city.

Wang Pao was eleven before he ever went with the donkey that wore the saddle. That

was always the work of Father after Grandfather grew old, and all the little boys and girls had to stay at home and help gather fire grass or plant cabbages in the garden around the house. So Wang Pao only knew the work of the donkey that wore the saddle by hearing his father tell about it. He had heard Father say, "Well, I made a goodly amount of coppers today, for I was early at the gate of the big temple and found that there were some men waiting already to go back to Peking. I went up to them and said, 'This donkey is strong and unwearied, and how much will you pay to ride him into the city?' They said thirty cents. But I knew they were impatient to go, so I said forty cents. They talked very little, but said if I could find another donkey for the same price they would go. I knew the other men would soon come, and they came almost before our bargain was made. So we went for forty cents."

Mother said, "How did you return?" And Father looked at her as if he were about to say, "I was just going to tell you." But instead of saying it he gave a pleased, tired sigh and said,

"I came back also running after my donkey, for there was a man at the city gate who wished to ride to our village."

Wang Pao often asked his father about the long, adventuring trips which he took each day, following the donkey as it bore some stranger into the city or back again, and Wang Pao had learned of many exciting places that Father passed daily. He had heard of the Pagoda of the Jade Fountain and wanted so much to see that place; and he knew there was a chance sometimes to stop and peep in through the gates that led to the Summer Palace, whose high hill and yellow roofs he could just see from his little home. He had even heard Father tell of the Strangers from Foreign Lands who sometimes came to the big temple and stayed there for a night and ate strange foods and walked about all day until they were so tired that they had to hire Father's donkey to carry them home to the city.

All of his life, it seemed to Wang Pao, he had wished and wished that he would soon be old enough to take Father's place with the donkey that wore the saddle and went on the long, thrilling journeys every day. He knew he was strong enough to run after the donkey and drive it on

the right paths, and he knew he could make the donkey obey him when he wanted it to go to the right or the left. Why, he had practiced for hours to get the whistle that the donkey obeyed, just right. If he said "Wo Wo" the donkey would go to the outside edge of the path, and if he wanted him to walk near to the inner edge of the path he would say "Li Li" in a loud voice, and the donkey would understand. The word that made a donkey stand still was hardest, and Wang Pao sometimes went into the little yard where the two donkeys were tied and practiced saying "Yu Yu" to them, but they were standing still already, so they just turned their big eyes on Wang Pao and wagged their ears as if to say, "What in the world do you suppose that little boy means by telling us to stand still when we are tied to our stakes and can't move." But those same donkeys would always start to go more quickly in the mornings when Wang Pao would come up behind Father as he prepared to start and say "Hit Hit," which means, "Go as quickly as your old legs will carry you." So Wang Pao knew that he was ready to take Father's place as soon as Father wanted him to.

It was a blue and gold October morning with

just a little cold in the air, so it made Wang Pao think of padded cotton trousers and a coat, instead of just blue trousers and sometimes no coat at all. It was a day very soon after he was eleven, and it was to be a very wonderful day, for Father said early in the morning, as Mother was cooking the porridge and Wang Pao was kneeling to keep the dry reeds burning under her pot, "Ai-ya, I think I must go over to the next village and see if I can exchange my good cabbages for corn meal. I shall take the work donkey to carry the cabbages, and I want Wang Pao to take the donkey that wears the saddle and try to get a fare from the temple into the city and back." Wang Pao turned on his heels as he was stooping to fill the stove, looked into Father's face, and did not say a word. Did Father really mean it? Father was always so quiet about what he said, but surely of anything so exciting as this he would speak more. Then Father said, "You will go, my son, and take the animal and try your luck. If you do well this day, in the future it shall be you who goes after the donkey that wears the saddle each day, and I shall stay at home. You are old enough, and I grow tired of the long journeyings."

Wang Pao could not understand how any one would rather stay at home so stupidly each day than go on long, adventurous trips to wonderful places, but he answered quietly, too, "Yes, Father, I shall do as you say, and if I succeed this day it shall be as you said, that I take your place with the donkey that wears the saddle and you stay at home as you wish."

"Good," said Father. "Now hurry with your food, so you may not be late at the temple."

Wang Pao hurried to scoop his corn-meal porridge into his mouth with his two chopsticks, put on his outer coat, saw that the girth of the donkey saddle was tight, and jumped on the donkey's back. As he rode away to go to the temple, Mother called from the door, "Be brave and trustworthy, and you will have fares enough and plenty of money, Wang Pao." And the little boy answered her in a high, happy voice, "All right, Mother, all right."

All the way along the tiny, gray path that led up to the gate of the great temple Wang Pao's heart was gay and unafraid. He knew that he would have no trouble at all. At the gate of the temple he got off the donkey and tied it to a near-by tree. Standing just inside the big green

and yellow gate, with his donkey switch of horse hairs under his arm, Wang Pao peered inside. He had never seen the great pond where the fishes were, or the little stone bridge that went humping up over the pond, or the high temple building and huge gingko trees beyond. They were all new and very wonderful, and Wang Pao wished a little that he could get inside and see, but he knew his business was to wait and watch for some one who wanted to ride his donkey.

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Very soon there came a sound of chattering like the noise of many crows in a tree, and then there appeared three strange-looking girls with faces of a paler color than Wang Pao had ever seen. They must be Strangers from a Foreign Land, and how unfamiliar their talking was. But Wang Pao said to them, "Do you want a donkey? I have a strong, brown donkey here who can go very quickly and carry heavy loads with ease. Do you want a donkey?"

One of the three girls laughed and said, "Aren't you too young to be in charge of that big, brown donkey?"

But Wang Pao straightened himself up and said, "I am more than eleven and quite old

enough. I can go anywhere you want and do whatever you say."

"Well," said the girl, "my name is Miss Stone, and my friends and I have a great, bulky roll of bedding and three camp cots to be carried by some donkey as far as the gates of the city. What do you want for such a load if your donkey carries it? We three will walk, and you with the donkey shall show us the way over the country by little paths. Maybe we will stop for a rest by the Jade Fountain, but we must not go too slowly for it must not be late when we get home. What is your price?"

Wang Pao liked Miss Stone. She was polite to him, and her eyes were brown and smiling. He looked right at her and said, "For such a trip as that, and you know it is not short, I say forty cents will be the price."

Miss Stone nodded her head, turned to the other two girls, and spoke softly. They nodded their heads, and then Miss Stone said, "Good, we will make it a bargain for forty cents to be paid to you in silver when we arrive at the gate of the city. Now, come with us and help to get the bedding rolls and the cots out here to load on the donkey."

There was a seller of fresh goose eggs who had come to the temple gate by then, and he agreed to watch Wang Pao's donkey while Wang Pao went in to help with the things. So Wang Pao really went into the courtyard of the big temple. He went past the great building where the sleeping god lay, and, behind it, up little rocky steps to a place that was called the Crow's Nest Pavilion. There he helped the three girls tie up their bedding roll. With the help of a servant, everything was soon ready, and Wang Pao put a cot on his shoulder and said, "We are all ready, Miss Stone," and started down the steps and out to the temple gate again. He was so happy and so excited. Carrying a load on his donkey while people walked was fine, because then there was no need to go too fast and get his donkey tired, and surely Father would be pleased with forty cents.

Miss Stone was kind to Wang Pao and helped him load the big, bulky bundle and the three camp cots onto the donkey that wore the saddle. She tied the ropes strongly, and laughed and talked to Wang Pao as they worked. In just a few minutes they were off on the long, beautiful trip by little country paths to the Jade Fountain

place where Wang Pao had never been. The donkey had been by this way many times and seemed to know exactly how to go, and Wang Pao watched the high hill of the Summer Palace and remembered which direction was east and which was south, so he would not lose his way, and there was no trouble at all.

Miss Stone came back of the donkey and walked with Wang Pao. She asked him, "How long have you been driving donkeys on this journey?" Wang Pao thought at first perhaps he should not say, because the strange lady from the foreign land might think he was not able to take her safely to the gate of the city, but she looked at him so sweetly that he burst out before he really thought very much and said, "Oh, this is the very first time I ever was allowed to take the donkey that wears the saddle on the long journey. My father has always done it before, and before that my old grandfather, and I have only heard about it. I am so happy that to-day I can take out the fine, big donkey and go on the little gray paths. I will never lose my way, for I can always go by the tower on the hill of the Summer Palace, and my father says I am very clever at knowing directions. This donkey is not

only strong and good, but he is very careful and wise. He never steps carelessly so that things or people fall off his back, and he knows the roads well. My father said that if I had no misfortune to-day and brought home a goodly amount of money, always I could be the one from our house to go out in the early morning with the donkey that wears the saddle and take people on the journeys they wish to make. My father and my mother are both trusting me to-day, and I am being very careful."

Miss Stone was very interested. "That is fine, fine," she said. "And what is the name that your father and mother call you, little donkey driver?"

"They call me Wang Pao, but I think you had better call me just donkey driver, for that sounds better, and I am no longer a child to be called by a child name. If you don't mind, Miss Stone, I would much rather have you call me Donkey Driver."

"Certainly, Donkey Driver," said Miss Stone, and Wang Pao was so pleased that he could not talk any more but just started yelling to his donkey, "Hit, Hit," which means, "Go as fast as ever your legs can carry you."

Soon it was time to reach the Jade Fountain, and they came around a turn in the big road which they had just reached, and there before them ran clear, green water that came out from under a high wall and went singing down under a bridge and off by the side of the road.

"Is that the precious, green water of the Jade Fountain?" Wang Pao asked.

"Yes, Donkey Driver," said Miss Stone. "And to-day I should like to take you inside to see the clean spring from which this water comes and the lake that the water makes inside the walls, and take you to climb the high pagoda that reaches up to feel the blue sky there on the hill. But whatever would we do with the donkey if we went inside the park? And really you and I might get so tired that we could not walk any more. So let's sit down here by the bank of this green stream and rest."

"Good," said Wang Pao. "I shall take off the load and the saddle from my donkey and let him eat a little grass while we rest. I think we should not get tired, for you see I want to get some one to ride my donkey back again from the city so I will make more money, and that means I shall have to make all this long walk back

again after you have gone into the city. But some day when I have time and have made a great many coppers I shall come here and buy a ticket and go in to see all this wonderful place."

Miss Stone lay down on the bank and rested, with her face in her hands. Wang Pao saw that she wanted to be quiet, so he stopped talking and sat near, watching the three girls and the brown donkey. He wondered a little what it was Miss Stone thought about, and then he wondered if he would be lucky and find some one who needed to ride his donkey back from the city. Really it was a long walk, and Wang Pao was a little tired now, but the most important thing was not to think of being tired, only to remember that if he succeeded this day he could come out many other days and have wonderful journeys and adventures with his donkey that wore the saddle.

Soon the three girls jumped up and said it was time to go on, and they helped to put the saddle on the donkey and tie on the bulky load, and then Wang Pao said, "Hit Hit," and then, "Wo Wo," to the donkey and they were off. The donkey obeyed the voice of Wang Pao and went along quickly, with his little brown feet and dainty ankles moving past each other in a

neat, steady way, right along the outer edge of the path, as Wang Pao had told him to.

On and on and on they went, the three girls talking together, or Miss Stone and Wang Pao talking a little about how quiet the world was and how the trees that were turning a little yellow and spilling their leaves about them made the gray road more beautiful. But Wang Pao could not talk much. He was really getting very tired, and he did not like to be tired. He kept thinking he must be strong enough to take the long walk back again in the afternoon. "I shall buy a great bowl of noodles at the city gate," he said to himself, "and that will make me feel better, for it seems so long since I ate my porridge."

When Wang Pao looked up again he saw that the gate of the city was very near to them. He was glad and told the donkey to hurry along. Miss Stone said, "We will stop on this side of the railroad bridge, so you need not go farther, Donkey Driver," and then Wang Pao called, "Yu Yu" to his donkey, and the three girls and the donkey and the little boy all stopped by the side of the road where a crowd of rickshas waited to take the girls and their bulky bedding

roll and their three camp cots into the big city. Wang Pao sat down on the stone by the side of the road while the ricksha men took the bundles from the donkey and put them into their rickshas. He was so tired. He thought he could hardly wait to get the bowl of noodles for his lunch, and he wondered if he would ever be able to walk all the way home again. He knew that he must do it no matter how tired he was, for if he failed to-day Father would certainly not let him go again until he was much, much older.

Miss Stone called, "Wang Pao, I mean Donkey Driver, come here." And when he led the donkey behind him and went over to where she stood, he found out what she had been thinking of as they rested by the water from the clear, green Jade Fountain, for she said, "You have been such an excellent donkey driver that we feel we really should give you some extra money so your father will be sure to know how good you are at this business. Now if I give you forty cents for our journey and another forty cents, which is what you would get if you went home behind some one else who hired your donkey, and twenty coppers to buy you some good

noodles and cabbage soup, will you do what we tell you?"

Wang Pao could hardly believe what she said, but he answered in a little voice, "What do you tell me to do?" And Miss Stone said, "We want you to eat a big lunch and then ride on your donkey and go home and take the money right to your father. Then he will surely know you are a good donkey driver, and then you will not be too tired. You are much too fine a donkey driver to get all tired out. Will you do as we say?"

"Oh, thank you and thank you, of course I will," said Wang Pao, and he went away with happiness all bubbling in his heart, for he knew how good the noodles and the cabbage soup would taste, and how easy it would be to ride home, and that when he arrived his father would be pleased and there would be more adventurings to-morrow and all the to-morrows to come.

NOODLE PAGODAS AND A SHADOW PLAY

Shih Te was ten. For a Chinese boy to be ten is almost as exciting as for a man to be sixty or a little boy baby to be one year old. For the birthdays that can be divided by ten are the very special days in China.

Shih Te had known for weeks and days just how long it would be until his Day. Usually time went very quickly for him, but lately, since he had been thinking so much about his birthday, time had been unusually slow, and the days took very long to get to the nights and start in a new day again.

Mother had helped the long hours to push past and had laughed at Shih Te's eager, questioning, little black eyes.

"Don't be impatient, Son. Mother understands. Sit here beside me in the sun of the southern windows, and I will tell you of how impatient I was for you to be three months old."

Shih Te came across the stone floor and walked carefully up the path which the sun made when it came through the window above Mother and onto the floor. Mother was embroidering a little shoe of blue satin for herself, and her lap was full of shining bits of colored threads. They were coral and green, turquoise and gray, ivory-colored and crimson, and they made a beautiful pool of light against her black silk dress. Shih Te came carefully along his sun path and then put his hands on the bits of bright silk. The colors of them seemed to paint his hands and fleck their thin brownness with bits of light. He was warm and very happy, for to-morrow was his tenth birthday, and now Mother was going to tell him one of the stories he loved best, about when he was a tiny baby. To begin, he asked her the question that he always asked about this story.

"Ma-ma, why were you so anxious for me to be three months old instead of waiting until I was a year old?"

Mother lifted a single silk thread of the green of willow branches in the early spring, threaded her tiny blue steel needle and, as she sewed a picture of a willow tree, she said, "You remember, Shih Te, that after the happiness of having you born to me, the next great day was when at last you were three months old and we could give a party to show you to all our friends."

Shih Te did remember, of course, for he had heard this story many times, but there is fun in asking mothers those questions that you know will always start them telling something you love to hear.

"And Great Uncle came, didn't he?"

"All the uncles and all the aunts, and the two grandfathers and the two grandmothers, and all your father's friends. And after I had dressed you in the small red coat and the small red trousers and put on your feet red shoes which I myself had made and embroidered for you, I put a round red cap on your little head and gave you to your father's mother to hold. You were not sleepy or unhappy, but your wide-open eyes seemed to say, 'What does it all mean, what does it all mean?' and you were so fat that you could

hardly see over your little chin to look at the shining red coat."

"I don't like to think I was such a silly baby, Mother. Now I will soon be a man. But go on with the story, it's the bath part I like best."

"Of course, oldest son, but your mother loves to remember her little son, and you were so precious. I was tired when you were finally ready to be taken into the room where all the people waited, to see the ceremony of making the baby clean. They had been there long, eating and laughing and talking, and I was so afraid you would be sick or cry that I was all excited. Grandmother took you in and I followed her, not too closely, for I would not have had any one know how I loved you more than all the world. She gave you to an old, old man who had come especially to lead the ceremonies. You looked at him and smiled."

"Oh, Mother, please go on to the exciting part where the old man put me in the little, round, red tub and then took me out again before there was any water."

"But you would not have had him let your beautiful clothes be wet, would you? So, of course, he took you out and held you on his lap

while all the uncles and aunts and friends of your father crowded close to look at you. I remember I could hardly see you once for the great padded coat of your father's mother which got between me and the sight of you. There was a little pan of water and some spoons, and each one took a turn in putting a spoonful of water into the tiny red tub. As they poured the water they slipped in with it pieces of money and silver and gold rings and little silver hat gods with round bulging cheeks. The grandmother, that is my mother, put in a gold god, larger than any of the others, for she knew that this little image would keep you safe and she knew how I loved you."

"And then, Mother, there was a big feast, and all those people ate and ate and I never ate any and you did not eat because you were tired, Mother, and you see the little gods kept me safe, and now I will be ten years old in just a little time and then I'll have a much nicer party."

"Yes, you will be ten," Mother said, and put down the little shoe of blue with the tiny, green willow tree drawn on it in silk thread, and looked at Shih Te.

"Yes, and it will be a nicer party, for this time it will be my friends and we will all eat a great deal. Oh, I think noodles are the nicest things to eat in all the world and I hope I get piles and piles of them for presents. I like them better than money and rings and hat gods because you can't eat those things and I don't need them at all."

"You will certainly get plenty of Birthday Noodles," Mother said. "And now the sun is going west and it will be time for supper. Will you sleep early to-night so that to-morrow may come more quickly?"

Shih Te ate his supper dreamily that night and went to bed quietly soon after it was over. His dreams were full of the noodles that he was expecting to come to him in the morning, great piles of yellow noodles, uncooked and floury, wound into the shapes of towers and brought to him on plates and in baskets. He wanted no other presents and his dreams were full of noodles until the sun came again and poked a finger softly through the paper windows of his room and in through the crack between the heavy curtains that hung on all four sides of his bed. The sun moved in little flakes of light over the

big blue quilt that covered Shih Te, until it found his face, and then it woke him up.

He woke up quite wide-awake at once. This was the day! "Mother," he called, and pushed the blue quilt to the back of the bed as he got out. Mother came into his room, and he was already getting his shoes on and tying the black bands tightly around his long trousers to keep them close to his ankles. Mother shook out his under coat of pink flannel and then unfolded a new blue coat that lay on a red chest. She helped him put it on, and they were both so excited that they could hardly speak. Mother could not tell Shih Te how happy she was and how she loved him, for he was such a big boy; and Shih Te could never think of words to say how glad he was his Day had come.

Before Shih Te was quite dressed the gateman came to the door and said, "The Great Uncle has sent gifts." And Shih Te pushed back the padded cloth door of his room and ran across the court to the big south room. There, in the center of the big square table, was a blue plate, and on it yards and yards of noodles, yellow and floury, wound into the shape of a tower that looked just like a pagoda. On the top of the

pagoda there was stuck a piece of red paper cut into the shape of the word that means happiness and "Many happy returns of the day," words that took so many strokes to make them that the piece of red paper looked like red lace, for a hat on the pagoda.

Shih Te danced around the table and shouted, "It is my birthday—my noodles—isn't it fun? Gateman, go and give the servant of Great Uncle who brought this present one hundred coppers for a thank-you to him for bringing it."

The old gateman bowed and smiled a smile all wide and full of teeth. Then he went away mumbling to himself, "Shih Te is a fine young man, a fine young man," and Shih Te, who heard him, felt very proud and grown-up and ten years old. He smoothed the front of his new blue coat and walked over to look again at his pagoda of noodles.

Breakfast for Shih Te that morning was just an ordinary breakfast, for that isn't a very interesting meal, and yet boys have to eat their rice porridge and their oil twists and drink a cup or two of tea so they won't get too terribly hungry before lunch. Shih Te never really knew what

he had for breakfast that morning. He just ate what Mother put in front of him, and four times, right in the middle of his breakfast, he jumped up and squealed with joy as the old gateman came in with other plates and baskets of noodles, some made in the shapes of little, round cakes with red writing printed right on them, and some wound and built to look like animals, a lucky bird and a funny crooked horse who could not really stand up and so had to have pieces of bamboo put into the middle of his noodle legs to make him steady.

Shih Te was so perfectly happy that he went about the house almost crowing like a rooster. Mother followed him with her eyes, and he went wherever Mother did to watch the preparations for the wonderful birthday supper. There were to be five of the boys he liked best for company and, of course, a whole lot of aunts and uncles and Father's friends who were not really coming to see Shih Te but just to tell Father and Mother that they were lucky to have a son ten years old.

"We must prepare enough," Mother said, putting plenty of tables in the big south room, "for all the relatives may come and we must be ready

for them, whether they come at five or six or ten o'clock."

"How many tables did Father order the restaurant to send in, Mother?" Shih Te asked.

"He said five tables, and with eight people sitting at each table there will be room for forty, won't there?"

Mother was talking so much about the feast and the food and the tables and the guests, that Shih Te never guessed at all that she had a surprise for his party, a wonderful surprise that all the servants knew about and were whispering of in the kitchen as they cooked crabs for crab noodles and chickens for chicken noodles and vegetables for vegetable noodles and sliced ham for ham noodles; a surprise that made the old gateman chuckle to himself as he sat on the bench just inside the big, red gate and waited for any more noodle presents that might come, and made pink spots come on Mother's soft brown cheeks as she thought of it while she went busily about telling the others what to do.

Noon came and then afternoon, and silver-gray doves went whirling across the very blue sky, with a sleepy noise coming from the whistles tied to their tails. The sun went from window to

window, going west, and then farther west, until finally the call of the evening meat-seller was heard coming down the little street, and it was quite time for the guests to come.

Shih Te was ready, a short black silk vest on over his long, blue silk coat, new black shoes with grown-up stubby toes like Father's, and his face shining clean from a great deal of washing.

Big lanterns hung in the four corners of the big hall; and in the courtyard across which the gateman would bring the company, red lanterns, with happiness words on them in gold, swung and flamed and glowed.

"Do not forget the ceremonial bow, Shih Te, when the older people come. You are the host to-night and must remember," Mother said softly. Shih Te nodded his head. He was really very excited, and his eyes were big and shining like brown and gold stars. He would stand just inside the door, behind Father, and when Father bowed, he would bow, and when Father said, "Thank you" for congratulations, he would also put his two hands together and say, "Thank you." It was really quite serious being ten years old and giving a birthday feast.

"Guests come, guests come," the old gateman called, and came running across the court with the red-paper cards of the guests. Father took the cards and looked at the names, then the gateman pushed the padded curtain up and Great Uncle and Great Aunt and three other uncles and five little cousins came in. They bowed three times to Father and three times to Shih Te, and Father bowed three times to them and Shih Te bowed, too, keeping his eyes on Father's back as he did it to be sure there was no mistake.

Everybody began talking at once, and only the littlest cousins were still and hung their heads and just peeped out under their black eyelashes to see how fine Shih Te looked in his new clothes. One of them whispered to another, "Doesn't Shih Te look big and old? Why, yesterday he was not nearly so grown-up." And the other whispered a little louder so that Shih Te heard, "But you see he is ten now, and that makes a great difference."

Shih Te, with his little head thrown back and his two black shoes very close together and his body held stiffly, said to himself, "Of course it makes a difference." And no one would ever

have believed if he had said how very much different he felt that night.

The other relatives came in one by one or in families, until the room seemed full and hot with people, and the five boys who were ten or nearly ten and Shih Te's best friends came, too, and they all acted very properly and hardly talked at all. Then there came from the kitchen a smell of crab noodles that made every one feel hungry, and the guests went over to any table they chose and sat down, and Mother called to the servants to serve the noodles.

"Shih Te and his five guests and his two ten-year-old cousins may sit at this table near the window," Mother said, and the eight small boys walked over and sat down. They could not think of anything to say at first, but as soon as the crab noodles, in great, blue bowls, were brought, and each boy was making his chopsticks help the noodles into his mouth, they all thought of lots of things to say. It seemed only a few minutes until all the bowls were empty and taken away, and Shih Te ordered, "Now bring the chicken noodles, and see that they are steaming hot, for we must have them hot." The servant bowed as if Shih Te were the master of the house, and

then he went away thinking about the surprise that was yet to come for the little boys. "He will not then act so grown-up," the servant thought to himself. "He will be very happy and gay."

"Hurry!" called Shih Te. "We are waiting for the noodles." And when the chicken noodles came and were eaten, there followed bowls of ham noodles and then a bowl of noodles in mutton soup with vegetables swimming in the soup, and the little boys ate until their cheeks were all hot and pink and they were quite, quite full.

Mother had been watching, and when they were finished and the servants brought around little towels that had been wrung out of hot, fragrant water and the boys were washing their faces and rubbing their fingers clean, she came to the table and said, "Shih Te, will you take your friends to the Great Hall at the back of the next court, for there we will have a little amusement for our guests."

"What do you mean, Mother?" Shih Te asked, for this was all the party he knew about, and then Mother told him the surprise.

"In the Great Hall, Father and I have hired Shadow Players to put up their paper screen

and make a Shadow Play with the puppets for you. They will play the story of 'The Chess Game of the Monkey and the Queen.' "

Shih Te could hardly believe what he heard. "A Shadow Play for my party, Mother? A real one with a white paper curtain and the little people made of donkey skin, and a light behind them, and a man to make them go and musicians to sing the story? Oh, Mother, how wonderful. I like this so much." And Mother only said, "I am glad, my son," but her heart was warm with joy and she smiled at the little boy.

So Shih Te and his friends and, after them, all the uncles and the aunts and the grandfathers and the grandmothers and the friends of Father went out of the warm southern room that was full of the good smell of noodles into the Great Hall, where already the musicians sat and the little paper curtain was hung, ready for the Man Behind the Lamp to give the Shadow Play.

THE CHESS GAME OF THE MONKEY AND THE QUEEN

Shih Te and his five best friends and his uncles and his aunts and his grandmothers and grandfathers and all the best friends of his father went into the Great Hall. There the only brightness was from the lamp behind a white-paper screen at one end of the room. They all sat down in that dining room to see a shadow play, and this is the story of it.

There was a Man Behind the Lamp who moved the little play figures of colored donkey skin across the screen. He went back of the red curtains and began the story in a singing voice. No one could see him, but every one watched the screen as he sang, "Once there were two kings, the king of Chu and the king of Chi, and they had fought a mighty war because the king of Chu wished to take the country of the

king of Chi." Across the screen came two old Chinese kings in long robes of gold and red and blue, with gay hats on their heads. They rode on wild, black horses. The king of Chu came from one side of the paper screen and the king of Chi came from the other side, and their horses' legs really seemed to walk across the paper. Behind each king came many soldiers and guards and servants, and when the two kings met and stopped, the soldiers and the guards and the servants of each one stopped, too.

The Man Behind the Lamp sang again, "And the king of Chu and the king of Chi talk together and say, 'We have fought too long and our soldiers are tired, but still neither of us has won the victory. What shall be done?' "

Then Shih Te and the others who watched the play could see the soldiers of the two kings whispering together and wondering what should be done.

The king of Chu said to the other king, "I have a very clever monkey whom I love dearly. He is a little brown monkey and he wears a red hat and a green coat and is the best chess player in all my kingdom. He plays chess with me and he wins; and he plays chess with generals and

always wins. Now I suggest for your consideration a plan: I suggest that we decide to whom the victory shall go by a game of chess. For my country the monkey shall be the player, and if you have any one in all your land who can beat him then I shall leave off attacking your country and you shall have the victory. But if my dear little brown monkey wins, then the victory shall be mine and all your kingdom shall be turned over to me."

The other king nodded his head until the feathers of his hat waved like a fan against the screen. He seemed to be thinking, and Shih Te said in a whisper, "Oh, I do hope he says he will play a game, for it will be such fun to see the little monkey, and if he says no, then there will only be more fighting and that isn't very interesting."

The king of Chi now looked at his soldiers behind him, and they looked at him and at the king of Chu who sat on his horse and waited. Then came the singing voice of the Man Behind the Lamp, pretending he was the king of Chi, saying, "Oh, noble enemy, I accept, and we shall decide this war in the way you suggest. Your monkey shall play for you, and I shall find in my

country some one to take the other side for me."

Then the kings touched their whips to their wild, black horses, and the horses leaped up on their hind legs and went galloping off, one to the left with soldiers and guards and servants following, and the other to the right with soldiers and guards and servants behind.

The king of Chu who had the clever monkey went off happily, for he was sure than he would win and then he would have all the kingdom of Chi added to his land. But the king of Chi went off wondering what he should do and how to find some one as clever as the monkey at playing chess. He went home to ask his queen, for in all the land she was the most clever person.

Against the screen there came now another picture, first two chairs were stood up and then in one of them was put the queen who was so clever. There was a beating of drums and a sounding of marching music which showed that a king was near, and the Man Behind the Lamp made the queen get up and bow as her king came in with great, manly steps and sat down in the other chair with a little jump. The king coughed twice and then said, "Oh, Queen, what in the world shall I do? I and the king of Chu

can never finish this silly war that he started to try to get my land, and now he suggests that we stop fighting and settle it by a game of chess, the winner of which shall give to the country for which he played the decision of victory. Oh, dear, oh, dear."

"Humm," said the queen, "Humm."

The king went on, "I really don't know much about playing myself, and the king of Chu has a famous monkey who is supposed to be the best chess player in all the world. The monkey will play for that side, and who in the world will play for us, I'd like to know?"

The Man Behind the Lamp made the queen lower her head as if she were thinking, and smooth her beautiful red dress with long fingers before she said, "I am not very good at the game of chess, but I shall play against that monkey, for though I am only a woman I am clever, more clever than a monkey, I should think."

The king jumped up at once. That was settled. He was glad the queen would play for him and he walked off with big, manly steps as if he had already won the game. The queen walked off after him with very tiny, lady steps,

and the two chairs were taken away and the screen was empty for a moment.

"Good, good," shouted the people who watched the play. "Good, good," they called instead of clapping their hands to show that they liked it and thought the Man Behind the Lamp was doing very well.

As soon as things behind the screen were ready, the Man Behind the Lamp put up against the screen the shape of a lovely Chinese house with upturning roofs of yellow tiles. There was a downstairs with a red balcony about it, and an upstairs that was not very clear. But every one could see the long, red ladder that led from the lower part to the top, and pretty soon the musicians began tuning their instruments, and when the beautiful queen appeared and went up the ladder, step by step, the musicians made little thumps on their drums each time her foot moved up, so it really sounded as if she were walking up the ladder, and as if the ladder was really made of wood. Then the two kings went up the ladder, too, thump, thump, thump, and as soon as they were up, the whole house and the kings and the queen and all disappeared, and the next picture was of the inside of the room

where they had gone. There were only two chairs in the room and between them a small square table on which the chess was to be played. The queen sat down in one chair and the two kings walked around and waited.

"Where do you suppose that monkey is? I am quite ready to play!" the queen complained. She was really nervous for fear she would be beaten and she did not like a little monkey to keep her waiting.

There was a squeak just then that sounded like a whistle and a chirp and a squeal all mixed up. Great Uncle said to Shih Te, "That is the monkey." And in a minute the squeak came again, and then there came jumping against the screen a tiny, brown, shadow-play monkey in a green coat and a red hat. He jumped and hopped along so naturally that the little boys who watched him giggled with joy.

"Ha," said the queen, "so you are the clever monkey."

"Squeak, squeak," answered the little brown monkey as he gave a jump and sat down in the other chair. He brought with him the black and white things that were to be used to play the game, and he banged them down on the table.

No more words were spoken, for the game began at once, and it was easy to see that the queen was not playing very well, while the little monkey moved his small black chessmen easily into just the right places. The queen moved a white figure and the monkey moved another black one until it was clear that the monkey would win. The king of Chu walked about slowly and was sure his monkey would bring him victory, and the king of Chi waited anxiously to see if the queen would succeed. But the monkey was winning, and the game was almost over, when suddenly the clever queen tried her trick. All people know that monkeys are greedy little animals, and his monkey was especially greedy when any one fed him the red fruit of the hi tang, so the queen had brought with her a little bag of his favorite fruit and hidden it in her sleeve. Just as the monkey played the last black figure and won the game, the queen threw out from her sleeve some of the bright red fruit, and the brown monkey forgot all about the game, gave a little squeak of joy, and jumped down to the floor to grab the hi tangs in his claws and stuff them into his mouth.

The queen laughed softly, reached her long

fingers swiftly across the table, and changed the little black figure so that it appeared she had won and the monkey had played wrongly. The king of Chi gave a shout of "Good, good," to his wife, but the little monkey went on scrambling over the floor looking for the precious fruit, and the king of Chu, hearing that shout and knowing that some trick must have been played if the queen had beaten his monkey, ran angrily from the room. He came to the red ladder and went down it quickly. He gave the ladder a great push and knocked it down as he called to his servants who were hidden near by, "Set fire, set fire to all the palace. There has been some trick, for no one could win from my little brown monkey."

Shih Te gave a gasp and his eyes opened very wide. It was the most thrilling shadow play he had ever seen. There was darkness back of the screen for a minute, then a wild flash of light and another and another, and plainly all could see that the whole beautiful palace was being burned.

"Where is the little monkey and where are the king and the queen of Chi?" Shih Te called, as if he could not wait for the Man Behind the

Screen to finish the story. Mother laughed and thought what a happy time her little boy was having at his birthday party.

As if to answer Shih Te, the queen appeared at once at one of the high windows of the burning palace, and on her back she carried the king of Chi who was so frightened he could not walk. She looked out of the window and then she gave a jump and landed safely on the ground so far below. She ran quickly away carrying the poor old king and that was the end of their trouble. But the little monkey did not come out and he died in the burning palace, and the king of Chu when he came back again was very, very sad.

"I don't think it was fair, Mother," Shih Te said after the play was finished and all the people were talking about it. But Mother said, "Oh, yes, it was quite fair, for you see the king of Chu was the one who would not stay in his own country and be peaceful and contented, but always had to try to get the land of other kings. Because he was not a good and peaceful king and because he loved the little brown monkey very much, he was punished by having the monkey taken away forever."

"But, Mother, the poor little monkey," Shih Te said, and Mother put her soft hand on his head and said, "But he was only a shadow-play monkey, and I know the fire did not hurt for it was only shadow-play fire."

"Yes," Shih Te answered. And then, "Oh, what a nice birthday I have had."

THE MAGIC PLAYING MICE

Ging Chen heard a bugle blowing out in the little street before his gate. It was not the flute that the candy man blows. It was not the long, sad sound of the knife sharpener's horn. Those are both wintery sounds that come in from the street when it is very cold and the paper windows are fast closed so the rooms may be warm with the smell of charcoal fires that burn in open brass braziers.

Ging Chen was only five years old, but he knew that it was not winter any more. The whole world was different now, and just yesterday, walking with Mother to the market on the

Big Well Street, he had said, "The water which the street-sprinkling man throws does not freeze in the streets to-day, Mother. It used to be frozen and slippery in little patches as soon as he threw it, but it is only soft and muddy where the water falls to-day."

Mother had said, "Warm days that are called spring are very near, and soon the smell of dust will arise from the streets and your small, fat hand will get hot and wet as you hold my hand and walk to the market."

Ging Chen had not thought very much about the meaning of spring until just now. The blowing bugle that came nearer and nearer, with a teedly-doodly sound, meant spring, for only when warm days came and the trees in the front courtyard pushed out their branches in little red swellings, and the blue sky came down close to the trees as if it loved them, did that bugle blow. It was the music that the Magic Playing Mice Man made when he wanted little children to come out of their big front gates and gather about him to see his trained mice do their magic tricks.

For a little boy who was only five, it was quite wonderful to have the dear excitement of another spring come pouring into his heart again. Ging

Chen went jumping across the court to the gate.

Up and down the street at each gateway little children stood listening and watching down the warm, gray, dusty street where the Magic Playing Mice Man walked slowly, carelessly, blowing his bugle and not looking either to the left or to the right. He knew the little children waited. He knew they liked him to pretend he had not seen them, for this gave them time to watch his face, to see the bright blue coat that he wore, and to look across his shoulder at the box he carried there on a leather strap. It gave the children time to remember other springtimes and days when he had come down their street before, bringing the most exciting playthings they had ever known. Ging Chen's eyes were wide and goldy-brown, and he thought of last spring and watched the little whirls of dust that bounced up into the sunshine from behind the moving feet of the Magic Playing Mice Man.

"Ha!" said the Mice Man. "Ha! there are not too few children in this place, are there? I rather think they may like to see my mice perform." As he spoke the children came stepping out from their gateways all along

the street and crowded about him as he squatted on his heels in the sunshine by Ging Chen's gate and put his box on the ground before him. He took out his long pipe that was tucked into his blue belt, pulled a little bag from his pocket, and put the pipe bowl into it to wriggle it about until it was full of golden brown tobacco. He brought the pipe out slowly, lit it, and smoked it, while the children stood looking and looking. Puff, went the pipe, and puff again, and there were no other sounds in the little street. The children waited as if they were at a theater and the curtain would soon go up for the play to begin.

The Mice Man spoke: "Shall I bring out the small, brown, furry ones and have them do tricks for you? Shall I tell White Spotted One to climb the tiny red ladder and Cross-backed One to climb down a string and sit on the back of a wooden frog? How many have pennies to give me when I go away? I must buy yellow meal to feed my brown mice, and if there are no pennies, how can I buy meal?"

The children watched the Mice Man as he spoke. Who else ever talked of such wonderful things? Of course there were pennies to give him. Ging Chen had three double coppers, which meant six pennies, and he decided to give them all to the Mice Man, if he would promise to make his Magic Mice do all the tricks they ever knew.

"I will give you all these six pennies, Mice Man," said Ging Chen slowly, stretching out his little hand. "I should think that would pay for a great deal of yellow meal and for a great many tricks, wouldn't you? I shall give them to you now, and will you please make the wee brown ones do all their tricks?"

"Yes, indeed, for six pennies they will do all the tricks you can remember from last year, and one very new trick that I have just taught them. I kept them all winter in their little brown house and when I was not too busy, I made them go over all their tricks so they would not forget. Sometimes when the days were very cold, they did not like to come out of the soft cotton wool that is their covering, and I had to tap their tails with my little red stick and stroke their backs, to

make them do as I said. I had a new trick and I taught them that. It is called 'The Holding of the Flag' and I must say it is an excellent trick." Puff, puff went the pipe, and then the Mice Man went on, "I have one, Brown Mouse I call him, who has an exceedingly wayward disposition. Sometimes he won't obey me at all, so I shall ask him to do the new trick to-day."

"Please bring them out now," begged Ging Chen in a little, impatient voice. "You have smoked such a long time."

So the Mice Man put his pipe away in his blue belt again, opened the drawer at the bottom of his box and took out a little mouse through a sliding door at one end. "This is where my mice live," he said, "and when all is ready I shall open the sliding door and take out White Spotted One to do the first trick."

It seemed to Ging Chen that getting ready took a very long time, but, as he watched, he thought of the Brown Mouse that had a bad disposition and sometimes did not obey. He would like to see that mouse. He really liked bad mice better than good ones, for if they acted too good and as if they were afraid, they

weren't funny, but just made him feel a little sad as he watched. A mouse that did not like to obey might be very funny indeed.

The Mice Man dusted off the little railed porch that was built around the top of the box he carried, untied some strings, and let down a little red wood ladder and a little green rope ladder that hung from holes in the floor of the porch and almost reached the street below. To a mouse, that must seem a very great distance indeed. Then Mice Man pulled from his pockets a wooden frog and a blue wooden tub and a little square block of wood with a hole cut in the middle. These he hung on bits of string from other holes in the floor of the tiny porch.

"Oh, I remember one thing," cried Ging Chen. "Last year a little mouse almost fell onto the street when he was supposed to climb down the ladder and get into his house."

The Mice Man laughed as he put up a small circular stairway in the very center of the porch. It wound up and up to a platform on top that was only as big as a postal card, but must have seemed high as a mountain and very large to a little mouse. "There,"

he said. "There is where I put up the flagstick and tie the new flag." So he took out a small flag of China with stripes of red, yellow, blue, white, and black running across it. The whole flag was only as big as two stamps stuck together, and the little stick on which the Mice Man hung it was no longer than two matches put end to end, but Ging Chen knew that if he were a little mouse that would seem like a mighty flag and an enormously high flagstick.

"We are ready," said the Mice Man at last, as he moved the sliding door to the little house of the mice. He reached his hand in where the soft cotton wool was and took out the mouse called White Spotted One.

"Little mouse, little mouse," sang the voice of the Mice Man. "Do your trick nicely and be very good, for the little boy here close beside me has given you six pennies to pay for yellow meal for your supper."

"Squeak," answered the White Spotted One, and he looked out from the big brown hand of the Mice Man with little beady eyes that darted from the face of the Mice Man as he talked to the face of little Ging Chen.

"You must climb up the red wood ladder from my hand to the porch, White Spotted One, and when you get there you may sit up and beg," said the Mice Man. So he put his big brown hand with the little mouse on it, right under the wooden ladder and White Spotted One reached up his front paws and took hold. Then he squeaked again and jumped his back legs up and started to climb. All the children pushed closer to see and laughed at the funny little business of climbing the very little ladder. White Spotted One heard them laugh and he did not like that, so he stopped still halfway up, and Mice Man had to take the red bone stick and rub his back gently and give him a little push. "Go on, go on, or how can you get back to your home and get yellow meal to eat?" he said. So White Spotted One went on climbing all the way to the porch, poked his head through the hole in the floor, climbed up, and sat down. He sat very still and waited, with his beady eyes darting about in a very gay way.

"Was that trick good or bad?" asked the Mice Man happily, for he knew the children would all say, "Good," and of course they did.

Then the Mice Man said to White Spotted One, "You may go over to the other side of the porch and find the hole that leads down a string to the blue wooden tub. Go down that string and sit in the tub. Then you may get into your house again and curl up in the cotton wool and sleep."

Just as if he understood, though the Mice Man helped him a little with pushes of the red stick, White Spotted One went running around the porch until he came to the right hole, then scrambled down the string head-first like a cat coming down a tree, and sat curled up very tightly in the small wooden tub.

"Oh, what a good mouse," called the children. And, "All right, all right," said the Mice Man, as he held the mouse house, with the door wide open, right under the tub. The little mouse saw it and gave a jump. He scrambled down under the soft cotton wool and went right to sleep.

What a wonderful Mice Man this was! Ging Chen thought he seemed more and more wonderful as he made other mice come out and do tricks. One mouse climbed from the box that was his home, right over the railing of the

porch and went running up the circular stairway when the Mice Man told him to; and one came jumping up the green rope ladder and went to sit beside the other. It was exciting to have two mice out at one time, and Ging Chen was so excited he could hardly breathe until they came down the stairs one after the other, and one of them went down the string that led to the frog and sat on the frog, while the other went down another string and sat in the little blue tub.

"Hold tightly, Brown Ones, for you are going to have a swing, and the little boy who gave the six pennies will push you."

Ging Chen put both hands behind his back and was a little shy, but the Mice Man said, "Just take one finger and give a little push to the wooden frog and a little push to the block of wood, and they will go swinging back and forth very gently."

So Ging Chen stuck out his forefinger and pushed, and the brown mice held tightly to their strings and went swinging.

"I think you ought to have two strings for them to hold," Ging Chen suggested, "for I

would not like to go sailing in a swing if it had only one string."

"But the mice are used to it, Small Boy, and they don't mind at all," said the Mice Man. "Now we will put their house here in the street and I shall say, 'Jump' to them and you watch." So the children waited, and the swings slowed down, and the Mice Man said, "Jump." The two mice gave little squeaks, looked at the open door of their house, and, leaping in through it, ran away and hid.

"Well, that is almost all of my tricks," said the Mice Man. "I shall try now the bad little brown one and he shall do the beautiful new trick which I call 'Holding the Flag.'" So out from the house he took a mouse that was bigger and browner than all the others, and whose eyes looked saucy and elfish as he turned them to see the children pressing about the magic box.

"This is the bad one of whom I spoke, the one that will not always do as I say, but I think today he will obey. However, we shall see, and because he did not do as I said yesterday, I shall have him do this hardest of all the tricks. If he should make a single mis-

take, I shall likely pinch his tail, and perhaps not give him any yellow meal to eat when we go home."

Ging Chen felt the tears coming into his eyes. It did seem so cruel of the Mice Man to say such words, but he supposed it had to be like that for mice that did not obey and for little boys who were not good. Once his Mother had to say he could not have any persimmons for dessert but—oh, there the trick was starting, and anyway it wasn't any fun to remember unpleasant times. Ging Chen watched the biggest mouse go slowly, lazily, but quite correctly, up a rope ladder, up the staircase to the second platform and stand there by the tiny Chinese flag of red, yellow, blue, white, and black that waved in tiny fashion from its stick.

"Put your paws on the stick, Brown One, and hold it tightly so you can pull yourself up," Mice Man ordered. Brown One put his two front paws on the stick obediently. "Pull yourself up until you are standing," the order came. Ging Chen could hardly breathe because he was so excited. The little mouse did not move at all. "Obey and stand," the soft

voice repeated, but still the mouse did not move.

Mice Man sighed and took out the long red stick. He held it over the tail of the naughty Brown One, and Ging Chen gave a little cry, "Oh, don't pinch him. Maybe he is just resting."

Mice Man's eyes were kind. "I shall not hurt him, little boy, but he must do what I say." So he gave a tiny pinch to the short brown tail and waited. Nothing happened at all. Brown One was not afraid or hungry or hurt. He simply did not feel like doing the trick and he would not obey. The children were perfectly still as they watched the face of Mice Man and the little brown beady eyes of the mouse who would not obey.

"There will be no yellow meal for you tonight, Brown One. Again, will you do what I say?"

Before the mouse had time to move, before the voice of the Mice Man had quite stopped, Ging Chen had a thought that made the pink come into his cheeks and a shining into his eyes. He stepped closer to the little porch, pulled from his pocket a piece of crum-

bly cake that he had been eating before the bugle blew, and reached it out to the little mouse.

"There," he said, "maybe you are too hungry to do tricks. Eat that first and then you can climb easily."

Brown One trembled as Ging Chen's hand came near him, but he grabbed the cake in his two front paws, nibbled it quickly until it was all gone, took a firm hold of the tiny flagstaff, and without any orders at all went climbing up until he sat on the very top with the flag waving beneath him.

"He did it, he did it!" the children cried. "He was hungry, you see, Mice Man."

Mice Man smiled. It really spoiled the trick to have the mouse obey the little boy instead of him, but it made the children so happy, and who could tell, perhaps he *was* hungry.

"You won't pinch his tail, will you, Mice Man?" Ging Chen begged. "And you will give him plenty of yellow meal for supper, because I am going to give you a whole extra penny and that should buy lots of meal. Say that you will feed Brown One very well."

"It shall be as you say," answered Mice Man as he put the mouse back in his house, packed away the wooden frog and the blue tub and the two ladders, and folded the little flag of China. "I shall feed him well," called the Mice Man as he put the box over his shoulder again and started down the road.

So the heart of Ging Chen was happy as he went in through his own gate and stood listening for the sound of the Magic Playing Mice Man's bugle to come teedly-doodling back from up the street.

SUGAR CAKES FOR A KITCHEN GOD

"Little Brightness, oh, Little Brightness, come in now. It is nearly time for your father to arrive, and so you must prepare for the party of the Kitchen God," called Mother at sunset time one evening.

All day the tiny Chinese boy with Little Brightness for his name, had thought only of the time when his father would come home and the party could begin. He had gone out into the street to play so he would not bother Mother and Big Sister as they worked, but in his heart he had been waiting and waiting for the sunset time and Father. At his Mother's call he ran from the narrow, dusty street, in through the red doorway which opened in

two halves like the covers of a gay book, and came to the courtyard before his house.

"Oh, Mother, I have been playing a game by myself. I played that I could not remember this was the night of the party when the kind Kitchen God goes on his journey."

Mother was busy in the kitchen, piling round, golden persimmons neatly on a round, blue plate, but she heard what Little Brightness said as he ran across the stone-paved courtyard and stood in the kitchen doorway. She put the last, lovely persimmon on the very top of the neat pyramid of fruit, then turned and laughed as she said, "What a game, my son! What a game to play when you have known all the day that to-night, at last, comes the party of the sugar cakes for the Kitchen God."

"That was why it was such fun," the little boy answered, as he stepped over the high doorsill into the warm kitchen. "I pretended I did not know that it was just one week until New Year, and I pretended I could not remember that Father would stay at home to-night and not go back to work. But the thing that is really the most fun of all is that I

cannot remember what the Sugar Cakes taste like."

Big Sister laughed then and said, "And I suppose you will pretend in a minute that you can't hear the call of the seller of Sugar Cakes when he comes by."

"Why, Big Sister, listen, there is the call this very minute. Of course I hear. The man who sells is calling:

'Who will buy sugar cakes?
Sugar cakes for the Kitchen God
When he goes riding to the sky.
Who will buy,
Who will buy?'"

Little Brightness ran out to the gate and called to the tall man who walked slowly along carrying a great basket on one arm, "Here, here, we will buy sugar cakes. Come here." The man came back, put his basket down on the step and waited while Little Brightness called, "Oh, Mother, the sugar-cake man is here. May I buy the ones for our Kitchen God?"

Mother came out to the door, still rubbing her fingers on her blue apron to get them clean before she took the sugar cakes. The man looked up at her and said, "These are

very good cakes, and only thirty cents a pound. What will you buy?"

One sugar cake was shaped like a great goose, another looked like a candy watermelon, and another was shaped like a horse. Little Brightness looked and looked at them and was very still while Mother decided what ones to buy. He loved the shapes of all of them, and he was trying to remember what they had tasted like last year when they had the party for the Kitchen God.

"We will take the sugar melon and the sugar goose," Mother decided, and when the man had weighed them and taken the coppers from her hand, she and Little Brightness took the beautiful cakes into the house. It was hard not to be able to take a bite at once. It seemed so long to wait until after the Kitchen God's party before having a single taste.

Just as they started to close the gate, a ricksha stopped and Father stepped out. Little Brightness was so excited to see him that the cakes almost fell from his hands.

"It is really time for the party now, isn't it, Father?" he cried. And when Father had given the ricksha puller six coppers and taken

all the bundles in his arms, he said, "You are right, Small One, it is time. I have been buying all kinds of things for the party. Come, you shall see."

In the kitchen where Father put the bundles down on a table Big Sister was nearly as excited as Little Brightness. She helped to untie the red string from the brown paper wrappings, and Father let her do it because her fingers were strong. Little Brightness climbed on a stool and rested his arms on the table and watched.

"Oh, those are rice-flour balls. I know how they taste. There is sugar and spice in the middle, and when they are cooked and I eat them, the sweet part comes out like sirup. And did you get the paper chair, Father?"

"Yes, here is the paper chair, all red and green and blue. What is it for?" Mother asked.

Little Brightness jumped down and went over in front of the big plaster stove. He peered up at a little niche cut out of the wall behind it and said softly, "I know, Mother, that is our Kitchen God painted on paper that hangs in the little niche. He is very nice to

us all the whole year, isn't he? And now it is time for him to go away up to the sky and tell the Jade Emperor, who is the biggest god, all about us. Is that right?"

It seemed as if the painted picture of the very kind Kitchen God smiled at Little Brightness and nodded his head. But as he started to answer the little boy in the long blue coat who stood with his brown hands clasped tightly behind him, Mother spoke, so the Kitchen God was still and listened politely.

"Of course that is right, my son, you do ask the most questions, and you haven't yet told me if you remember for what the paper chair is used."

"Why, for our Kitchen God to ride in, on his journey after we have the party for him," Little Brightness answered.

Big Sister came then to poke the red coals that showed in the one hole on the top of the stove. She put some more black coal balls into the hole and the red coals didn't like it so they spit and sparkled. Mother filled the kettle with water from the courtyard well and put it on to boil as she said to Father, "All the food is ready and the fruits prepared. The

paper horse is bought and put in the cupboard by the door. The packages of incense are on the table."

"Therefore, I think," Father said, "that it is time to prepare ourselves and put on clean new clothes."

Little Brightness and Big Sister ran to the bedroom, opened wide a bright red trunk, and pulled out their best clothes. Mother came in, in time to button the hardest button of Little Brightness' new blue coat under his chin. She smoothed Big Sister's hair and put a spray of red velvet flowers behind her ear.

"Isn't my pink dress beautiful?" Big Sister asked. "May I get out my two silver bracelets? And, Mother, will you wear your two gold bracelets and your two gold rings and your gold hairpins that Father gave you when you were married?"

"Of course, child," Mother said gently, as she opened the little red-leather jewel box and took out her treasures of soft, yellow gold. "Every one dresses in his best for the party of the Kitchen God, you know, and with my green silk dress I shall wear my golden things."

When Mother and Big Sister and Little

Brightness were ready they came back to the kitchen. There the table was moved in front of the Kitchen God picture and on the table Mother placed the round, blue plate of round, red persimmons, and the sugar cakes. At either end of the table Father put a tall, red candle, and in the exact middle, a bowl for the incense to stand in and be burned. Father lit the two red candles and took a bundle of fragrant incense in his two hands. He lit it from the candles and then he said:

"Stand straight beside me, my son." Everything was very quiet in the warm kitchen. Father stepped up to the table again, bowed to the Kitchen God, and put the long, brown sticks of incense in the bowl. Little Brightness, standing straight and still, looked with his brown eyes and saw the soft, gray smoke go wandering to where the Kitchen God sat painted on a paper. The kind god seemed very pleased. Perhaps it was the smoke in his eyes that made Little Brightness think the Kitchen God was crying with joy. It must be fun to go on a long journey after you have stayed for a whole year in one place. It must not be much fun to sit and watch people every

day and remember whether they are good or bad.

Father spoke then, "Bow to the Kitchen God, and say good-by to him, Little Brightness. He goes to the Jade Emperor of the Sky to tell him of us. Ask that he tell all the good things you have done."

Little Brightness folded his small hands, looked past the flaring candlelight through the soft, whirling smoke of the incense at the Kitchen God. He bowed his head and said, "Kind Kitchen God, when you go journeying and reach the King of the Sky, tell him much about how good I am and little of the times when I was bad."

"That is right," Father whispered. "Now, Big Sister, you come." And as Little Brightness turned to make room for Sister, he said very softly, "Thank you, nice Kitchen God, for going, so we can have some of your party." For you see Little Brightness could not help thinking of how good the food and the fruits and the candy melons would taste when it came time to eat them.

After Big Sister bowed, Mother bowed, and she said the most words of all. Some of them

Little Brightness could not understand, but he knew she cared a great deal whether the Kitchen God told good things or bad about her boy and girl. The last thing Mother said was this, "When you come back next year, Kitchen God, we will be glad, for you make all our food delicious and you keep the fire in our stove from burning anything except the coal balls and wood."

Father went to the cupboard by the door and took out the paper chair. He put it on the stone floor and beside it put a paper horse. This was the horse who could travel a thousand miles a day and carry the Kitchen God safely. Little Brightness piped in his small voice, "Oh, Kitchen God, if you get tired you can sit in the chair and rest." But Mother said, "Hush," and turned to watch Father get the firecrackers and the paper money and put them on the floor beside the other things.

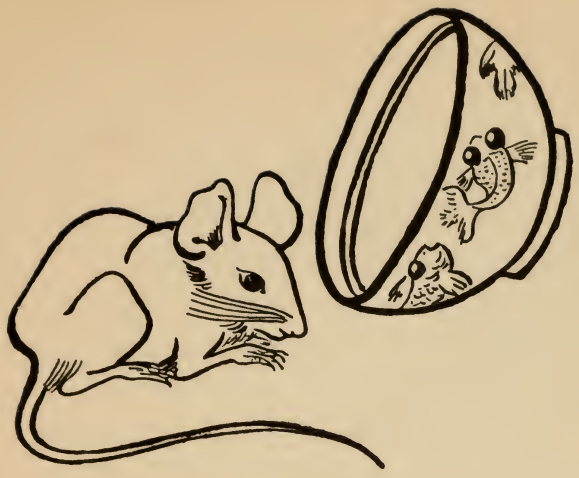
Little Brightness whispered to Big Sister, "That paper money is for the traveling expenses, isn't it?" And she nodded her head and watched, for now Father was taking the Kitchen God and putting him carefully on top of the paper horse. Mother took a bit

of sirup on her fingers, touched the mouth of the Kitchen God with it, and said, "There, now, there now, speak only sweet things, only sweet things."

"All is ready," Father said in a solemn voice. "Give me a match, my son." And with the match he made a fire, and the Kitchen God and his paper horse who could go a thousand miles, and the paper chair in which he could rest, and the paper money for traveling expenses, were all quite burned up. They made blue and red flames, and little gray ashes flew up in the flames. Little Brightness could almost see the Kitchen God float right away on his horse, through the roof and on his journeyings. It was quiet in the kitchen, and at last all that was left was a tiny heap of gray ashes on the floor. So Father lit the firecrackers and ran out in the court to let them go off with a great noise. That was to frighten away anything that got in that Kitchen God's way as he traveled.

At last Mother called, "Come, Little Brightness, come, Sister, we shall have the party and eat all the good food which the Kitchen God left."

So there were rice-flour balls all soft and sirupy, and round, red persimmons, and horse-riding Kitchen God sugar cakes for Little Brightness' and Big Sister's and Father's and Mother's share of the party.



A RED CHERRY AND A LITTLE WHITE MOUSE

"Lang tang, lang tang, i-ke lang tang," called tall, old Grandpa. He smiled a wide, glad smile at all the Rich People Who Watch, the audience who sat on black chairs and looked at him. He bowed to them and put out his hand to Lu Deh who stood beside him in front of a table covered with a red cloth.

"Bow, my grandson," he said to Lu Deh, and the little boy closed his brown eyes, put his two small hands close to his sides and bowed very low. Lu Deh was not afraid. He

was quite used to coming to great people's houses at night and helping his grandfather give performances of magic tricks to amuse the Rich People Who Watch. His grandfather could bring a great bowl of goldfish out from under a cloth that seemed to be lying flat on a table, or make a red cherry turn into a little white mouse. Lu Deh was only nine, but ever since he had been two years old he had helped his grandfather with magic tricks. So he bowed again and Grandpa smiled. The Rich People Who Watch smiled, too, and Grandpa said:

"He is a very little boy as you can see, but quite clever and wise about matters of magic."

Nothing in all the world made Lu Deh as happy as for Grandpa to say nice things about him. It was nicer than all the thrill of staying up late at night and coming through the dark streets with high walls on either side, walls that pressed so close to the sky that they made the stars seem near enough to touch. It was nicer than going to strange houses where the Rich People Who Watch lived, and seeing their bright rooms with yellow carpets on the

floor and red and gold lanterns hung from the ceilings.

The Rich People Who Watch were clapping now. That was because Grandpa said, "Now we will begin this show of great magic and you shall see if Lu Deh and I are good workers of tricks."

Lu Deh handed Grandpa a long piece of white tape and then stood to one side very carefully so that every one could see as Grandpa showed them that the tape was one long, unbroken piece.

"Now I shall have Lu Deh cut this right into two pieces and then by magic it shall be mended again," said Grandpa very solemnly.

Lu Deh rolled back the sleeve of his coat, jerked up the belt of his green trousers, and took a knife from the table. It was sharp and long, so Lu Deh took it in both hands, walked over to where Grandpa stood with the tape held out, and cut it right in two.

"Lang tang, lang tang, i-ke lang tang," sang Grandpa, for that was the most magic speech and sure to mend the broken tape so that no one could even see where it had been

cut. He blew on the two cut ends, wiggled his hands quickly, and called, "Here, Lu Deh, you take this end and pull it with all your strength." So Lu Deh held one end and pulled, and all the Rich People Who Watch could see in just a minute that the tape was entirely mended and that the magic of Grandpa had not failed.

Again the Rich People Who Watch clapped, but before they finished Lu Deh was thinking of the next magic trick. Grandpa would make a great bowl of goldfish swimming about in water, come from under a cloth that seemed to all who saw it to lie quite flat on the table. Lu Deh knew this trick well. He could have told you just how Grandpa did it, but of course he wouldn't, for to keep the secrets of magic was one of the most important things Grandpa had taught him. If you know the meaning of magic and just how it is done, sometimes it is not so interesting. And this was especially true this night for Lu Deh because his heart was quite full and his thoughts busy about a very hard, new trick that he was to do all by himself as soon as Grandpa finished the goldfish magic.

Lu Deh's trick was not so much magic, but it was very wonderful and very hard. Ever since he was two years old Grandpa had been teaching him to bend his body backward and sideways, until he could make it do anything he wanted and obey whatever way he told it to bend. Next Grandpa had taught him to stand on a high stool, lean over backward till his hands touched the floor, and pick up three bowls. One bowl he must put between his white teeth, and one of the others in each small hand, and then came the hardest part of all, which was to lift himself back up again until he stood erect on the stool.

Lu Deh had practiced and practiced and practiced this trick. It was hard to learn and hard to make perfect. Many times he had thought he did it well enough for Grandpa to let him show it at the houses of the Rich People Who Watch, but always Grandpa had said, "That is well done, my boy, but not yet perfect, and so may not be shown in places where I do my magic tricks. You must practice more. You must make your two hands stay just the same distance from your sides as you rise with the bowls in them, and you

must not make such a noise with your breathing. Would you want the Rich People to think this trick was too hard for you and so you had to breathe like a puffing dragon? Practice more, Lu Deh, much more."

So every day he had tried the hard trick at his home where he lived with his grandfather, and it was only this afternoon that, just as he finished doing the trick, Grandpa had said, "I was watching you that time, Lu Deh. You have done perfectly. To-night there is a Rich Man who wishes to see our magic and to-night I have planned that you may show your own trick."

Lu Deh had laughed with joy. "Oh, that is good," he said. "I know I can do it well enough and you will not be ashamed."

But now, in the great, warm room with the yellow carpet on the floor and the red and gold lights against the ceiling, with so many people looking and talking and clapping, and Grandpa doing his tricks with never a mistake, Lu Deh could not keep from wondering if he really knew his trick well enough. "If I did it poorly," he thought, "Grandpa would be very angry. He would not scold me, but he would

be quite still and he would not put his hand on my shoulder and praise me. I would be so ashamed that I could not even look into his face. Oh, I must do it well."

Grandpa was speaking, and Lu Deh came away from his thoughts to hear him say, "Lift the red cloth, my grandson, and show what is to be seen."

Lu Deh lifted the red cloth that had seemed to lie quite flat on the table and there under it was a great bowl of water and in the water real goldfish swimming about as if they were excited. How the Rich People Who Watch clapped and how shrill their voices were as they talked.

Not until all was quite still again did Grandpa speak. "There is something new to show you this night," he said. "It is a trick you have never seen and one that my grandson will do. It is not magic, but is very difficult and it has meant years of preparation and practice. If my grandson does well you will be very pleased, I am sure."

He turned now to Lu Deh who was standing quite still before a narrow stool which stood on the yellow carpet.

"You are able?" Grandpa asked.

"I shall not fail," answered Lu Deh and he climbed up on the narrow stool and stood with his back toward the Rich People Who Watch. He waited there for Grandpa to speak, for, though he knew just what to do, it was the proper way when people watched to wait and listen carefully for Grandpa to speak.

"Stand well," called Grandpa. "Bend backward with care! Reach for the bowls with your two hands and complete the trick."

Slowly, beautifully, easily, Lu Deh bent his slender body backward until his head was level with his small shoes. Then he rested his shoulders on the stool, too, and stretched his arms down and down behind him until he found the three bowls. One he put between his teeth, and one he held tightly in each hand. He waited for Grandpa to speak, and before the words came he heard the Rich People Who Watch give little gasps as if they thought he was hurting himself or could not get up again. They did not know of the days and days that he had practiced. Oh, how he hoped that he would not fail. So far the trick had gone

easily, but the hardest part was yet to come, for if his foot should slip on the stool or his teeth not hold the bowl tightly between them, oh, it was not very easy.

"Arise, my grandson," came the loving voice of Grandpa, and Lu Deh made his small body obey. Up he came, his hands an even distance from his sides, the bowls held carefully and his eyes tight shut. He tried his very best and then, suddenly, wonderfully, he was standing erect and the Rich People Who Watch were clapping and shouting and laughing as they had not done all the evening. Lu Deh still stood with his back to them and watched Grandpa's face.

"Get down, my grandson, for a Rich Man beckons to you," said Grandpa quietly.

"Here, little boy," said the Rich Man, when Lu Deh bowed before him. "Here is a round silver dollar for you because you did the trick so well."

Lu Deh bowed again and thanked the Rich Man. He loved silver dollars, of course, and he liked the Rich People to appreciate his trick. But what he wanted most in all the world was to hear Grandfather speak. He

turned and lifted his eyes to the face of Grandpa, and Grandpa beckoned him to come near. When he stood beside him, facing the crowded room, Grandpa put his hand on his shoulder and said out loud so all could hear:

"Is it not well done? It is even better than I thought when I promised you it would be good. My grandson has made a perfect showing for you." And all the Rich People called in loud voices, "Good, good," and Grandpa pressed Lu Deh's shoulder and whispered, "They speak truly, my grandson." So the heart of the little boy was full of happiness.

There was one more surprise, and Lu Deh was as surprised as any one. Grandpa said, "I shall complete the magic showing of this evening with a trick that is very difficult, but which is the favorite trick of my good grandson, and so is done to reward him as well as to amuse you."

Grandpa took a green bowl in his hand and showed every one that it was empty. On the yellow carpet before him he put a round red cherry and covered it with the green bowl. Lu Deh knelt down beside it and watched. He could hardly believe that Grandpa would

do this special trick for him. He listened as Grandpa said the magic words, "Lang tang, lang tang, i-ke lang tang," and then lifted the green bowl.

Under the bowl, where the red cherry had been, stood a little mouse all pink and white and a little afraid. He looked at the Rich People Who Watch and they frightened him more. He looked at the green bowl which Grandpa held in his hand and that, too, seemed unfriendly and cold. At last he saw the small warm hand of Lu Deh held out to him kindly, so he gave a tiny squeak and slipped over the yellow carpet to climb into that hand and sit still. He knew that Lu Deh loved him and he loved Lu Deh and his warm brown hand.

So the little boy who had practiced and practiced to make his trick perfect for Grandpa had the two things he liked best in the world: Grandpa had praised him and right out loud in front of all the people, and he had the tiny, white mouse in his very own hand for a reward.

PROMISE OF MUSIC

"Promise of Music" was a yellow canary bird who lived in a small black cage. He had a water cup that was blue and a cup for his millet seed that was smaller, but just as blue. And he and his cage lived on the big street of the Lung Fu Ssu Fair, at the house of "The Excellent Bird Man."

Promise of Music had no friend so wonderful as the Excellent Bird Man, for it was he who put millet and water in the two blue cups and hung Promise of Music out in the sunshine

when it was warm, or put a blue cover down over his cage when night came. The Excellent Bird Man was always kind to the small yellow bird and seemed to understand when Promise of Music tweeted to him of "What beautiful weather we have to-day," or trilled him a poem about sunlight on the green shining roofs of the temple where the big fair was held.

There were many other friends for Promise of Music, for the little shop of the Excellent Bird Man and the courtyard were quite filled with cages of birds. Little red-throated Love Birds lived, two by two, in bamboo cages. Gray Peaceful Birds with yellow spots on their tails and bits of gold in their feathers sat, fat and sleepy, on perches in other cages. There were Mongolian Larks that sang early, early in the morning, and Bager birds that little boys like to buy and carry about on sticks. Out in the courtyard on good days there hung ten brass swings, and on each one was a terrifying macaw with curved yellow beak that bit and tore at the brass rings about her pink feet; or real parrots, green and shining, and very proud and angry. Promise of Music was quite afraid

of those birds that did not live in cages but swung from yellow brass swings. He used to twitter excitedly in the mornings when the Excellent Bird Man just took him by them on the way to hang his cage in the sun.

"Really," Promise of Music would twitter, "really, it hardly seems necessary to have so many of those loud speaking birds about. They don't mean half they say, I know, but they do make me a bit nervous."

White Macaw would laugh a high screaming laugh and hang by her beak and say, "Well, well, the little yellow one is ready for breakfast, isn't he? Good day, little Promise of Music." She really felt quite friendly toward all the other birds and especially toward Promise of Music, but she did have the strangest ways of showing her feelings.

As soon as he was hung safely on his own hook in the sunshine, Promise of Music felt quite at home and started to preen his feathers, puffing himself out like a yellow ball and then shaking himself well. He would spread out first one yellow wing and then the other, and comb them neatly with his beak. A bird cannot be too careful about these little morn-

ing duties, for he never knows when a buyer may come and the Excellent Bird Man may try to sell him for many and many coppers. Some birds came to the shop one day and were sold the next, and always on Fair Days some one came to buy a bird. Promise of Music had been there long, long days and he often wondered why he had not been sold. Sometimes he thought it was because he could not sing very beautifully yet, or because he did not keep his feathers clean enough, but he really believed in his little yellow bird heart that it was because the Excellent Bird Man liked him especially much and did not want him to go away. At least that seemed the only reasonable explanation of asking three whole dollars of coppers for him whenever any one came to the shop and said, "And the little yellow canary sells for how much?"

Whatever the reason, Promise of Music was glad he had not been sold. He loved the Excellent Bird Man more than any one else in all the world and he did dread going off with some one who might not remember to give him fresh water and yellow millet in his blue bowls every morning. Once a poor, tired,

sick, little Waxwing bird had been brought to the Excellent Bird Man's shop to be cured. And when he had rested a little he told a terrible story:

"Oh, you birds in the shop are lucky! Why I have lived for three months in the house of a man who was sillier than I ever thought a man could be. He never did feed me until he was finished with his own breakfast, and I had always been awake and chirping for hours before his old wife even lighted the charcoal stove. Sometimes he forgot altogether to feed me, and one morning when I told him quite plainly that I felt decidedly like having two or three good fat reed worms for my breakfast, he went right ahead and served me the same old breakfast food. Now, any one that knows anything about birds should understand a simple remark like that about reed worms."

"I should certainly say so," Promise of Music cheeped as he took a little sip of water and lifted his head far up so it would trickle down his throat. "Excellent Bird Man would have understood all about that and likely brought you the worms before you asked for

them, as he says he can tell from the complexion of birds what they like for breakfast."

"I tell you I nearly died, and it was certainly lucky the man understood that much and brought me back here to be cured. Oh, it is good to be among those who know what I need and how I feel. I tell you I nearly died, and I hope the man forgets all about me and doesn't come to get me when I am cured, and that I never get sold again."

So it is easy to understand how the one thing Promise of Music wanted least of all was to be sold.

One day in the very early morning the Excellent Bird Man began to put out his birds, to clean their cages, and to give them their breakfasts as quickly as ever he could.

"There, White Macaw!" he said. "Stop your laughter and don't go splashing water on my clean blue coat. I must get your cup washed out for you spit all the husks of your seed in it yesterday." Then he would turn to the Gray Peaceful birds who always sat so quietly in their cages, and gave them soft, gray-colored rape seeds to pick up in their curved, pink beaks and crack. Then he would

say, "Little tired Waxwing, here is a new fat worm for you. I bought a bundle of reeds just come from the bank of the far-off moat, and in each reed as I split it I found a worm for you. Oh, you would like another? That one slipped down quickly, didn't it?" And Waxwing was quite happy and puffed up his chest and sat waiting for another worm. He could just barely remember back to when he lived among the reeds, a little wild bird, and found his own worms for breakfast, but he rather thought he liked this life the best, for there was so much less to do since the Excellent Bird Man always fed him.

At last it was the turn of Promise of Music to be fed. He tripped back and forth on his perch in his black cage, peeping first into his empty water bowl and then into his empty food bowl and chirping.

"So you have nothing to eat or to drink," said the Excellent Bird Man, "no water at all nor any yellow millet. Poor little Promise of Music, poor little birdie." But the bird gave a long trilling whistle that said, "I am not poor, and I am hardly even hungry, for I just finished the last bit of my millet. You

are so good to me, so very good. Oh, I hope I never have to leave you." And the Excellent Bird Man laughed and said, "Well, so you are learning to sing, and you sing for your breakfast, is that it? Here, wait until I finish pouring in the water. You are not supposed to drink it as I pour it from the teapot into your blue bowl."

Promise of Music sang again. He really did not know he could sing so nicely, and since it seemed to please the Excellent Bird Man very much, he must try again. His little yellow bird heart was very gay. He splashed water over himself and cleaned his wings, and then suddenly he remembered the reason why the Excellent Bird Man was up so early. This was Fair Day, one of those busy noisy days when people came from all over the big city to the temple with the green shining roofs to buy many things. Always as they went in carrying big bags of coppers, or as they went out carrying feather dusters, or new brooms, chrysanthemum plants, or packages of candy, they stopped to watch the birds in the Excellent Bird Man's shop and talk of their pretty colors and their fine strong

cages. And some people always came in to buy birds to take home to their children, and sometimes the children came, too, and chose the birds they wanted. The boys all liked Bager birds best. They never bought cages, but always let Excellent Bird Man tie little strings to the Bager's legs and fasten the strings to sticks. It made Promise of Music very happy to think of Fair Day again, and it made him wonder, as he always did, if some one would buy him this time, or if he could stay with the Excellent Bird Man.

Soon the noise of carts coming down the road and the talking of men carrying loads of brooms or flowers or baskets to put in the temple grounds for sale came into the court-yard where Promise of Music lived.

"The fair will soon open," he thought, and chirruped to himself. "It is such a gay day that many people should come."

White Macaw heard Promise of Music and she added, "This is one of the most important fairs of all the year. The fair comes every ten days, but no other days are so important as this one."

"Why? Why?" whistled all the other birds. And White Macaw answered as she swung from her brass perch, "This is the fair before the eighth month's feast, and after this day comes the day of paying bills when all the shops and all the people have to pay every bill they have. I know all about such things, for I am an old bird and very wise, very wise."

The other birds twittered softly together about what she said, and all of them began to feel excited. Little yellow Promise of Music stood quite still on the edge of his millet bowl and did not eat for a minute. He bent his little head to one side and listened and thought about the Excellent Bird Man, and then it was he heard him speak to a man who had just come in:

"Yes, yes, I have not forgotten that big bill I owe you for yellow millet to feed my birds. I am sorry it is so long unpaid. I could not let the little things go hungry and I have not sold many just lately. But to-day is the big fair, and to-day when the people come in to buy I shall be sure to sell enough so that there will be money to pay you. I am sorry,

I am sorry. Please excuse me and be patient until after the fair."

"Poor Excellent Bird Man," thought kind little Promise of Music. "I wish I could help him," he sang, and then he liked the sound of his own song, so he sang it over and over again, a little, trilling, warbling tune that he poured right out of his yellow throat.

When the sun shone straight down at noontime instead of sideways across the birds' cages from the east, the fair grounds were beginning to fill with people. They went in with bags full of coppers and they came out with the coppers gone but their hands full of lovely things they wanted very much. And always on their way in or on their way out they stopped at the Excellent Bird Man's shop to look and ask prices of pretty birds and listen to the songs they sang. There came a beautiful woman with a crimson silk flower in her hair and a dress of flowered pale lavender silk, and soft white hands. Behind her was her servant woman carrying a little package of sweets tied with red string, and the plant of a famous chrysanthemum that already bore fat, golden-red buds, and a twist of pink embroidering

thread that her mistress needed. They had just been to the fair, and now on the way home the young woman said, "Oh, I just think I'll buy a bird to take home and play with. What kind shall I get?"

The Excellent Bird Man heard her and said encouragingly, "I have many kinds, won't you step into my shop and look? There is a white macaw who would be very picturesque in a great palace such as your home must be, and little red-throated love birds that twitter softly in their cages all day. And I have Gray Peaceful birds; see the spots of gold on their tails? And, of course, there are canaries, but probably they are too common for you."

The young woman looked at all the birds, and White Macaw screamed at her. The young woman looked hardest at little Promise of Music in his small black cage, swinging in the sunlight. When Excellent Bird Man saw her looking there his heart gave a little leap; he could not bear to sell that tiny yellow bird, and yet he might get much money if he did, for the wee bird was singing so beautifully now.

Promise of Music looked into the face of the Excellent Bird Man and seemed to see his thoughts. There were thoughts in his own yellow bird heart, too, and mostly they were about what he could do to make the young woman with the rich silk dress of lavender think him a very lovely bird and quite, quite worth three whole dollars of coppers. He tipped his head to one side and then to the other and thought very hard. The young woman said in a high, pleased voice, "How much is that little yellow canary, Birdseller?" and then before the Excellent Bird Man could answer, Promise of Music knew what it was that should be done. He must make the lady know how well he could sing, so he opened his little yellow bill and trilled and warbled and sang, and the bird man, looking up at him, smiled and understood, and said, "That little yellow bird is a very excellent canary, and I could not possibly sell him for less than four whole dollars."

Promise of Music heard him and was surprised at the big sum of money the Excellent Bird Man said, but he kept right on singing as if he would burst his tiny throat with

beautiful songs, and the young lady liked him and said, "Well, that seems a good bit of money, but, as you say, he does sing well, so I guess I will take him, for I have plenty of money and I really want a yellow bird."

How happy Promise of Music was. He forgot all about being afraid that he would not be nicely fed, and he almost did not mind leaving his very best friend, the Excellent Bird Man, because he knew that now he would bring money enough to pay almost all of the bill for yellow millet, and that the Excellent Bird Man would not have to worry any more because he had no money.

The Excellent Bird Man was very sad to let Promise of Music go, but as he filled his little blue bowls with millet and water for the last time, he whispered, "Promise of Music, I know what you have done, and you are a precious little bird. The money will make me happy, but nothing can make me happy enough to want you to go. Yet, have no fear, little yellow one, for the rich lady likes you well, and you will not suffer for food and clean water. Good-by, little Promise of Music."

"Good-by," sang the little bird, "good-by,

and don't worry about me, for I love you so much and I am so glad that I could help you a little. Good-by." And the young lady took his cage carefully in her hand and carried him herself and laughed when he sang his good-by to the bird man. "Servant," she called, "let us go down by the grain market where the best bird seeds are sold and buy a great deal to feed my new yellow bird, for we must never let him get hungry, you know."

"Never, never, never," sang Promise of Music and he was glad in his yellow bird heart.